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1843





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THE  
**LORDS OF ELLINGHAM;**  
A Drama,  
IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

**HENRY SPICER, Esq.**

AUTHOR OF "LOST AND WON," "HONESTY," &c.

*SECOND EDITION.*

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**G. W. NICKISSON, 215 REGENT STREET.**

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## CHARACTERS.

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DUDLEY LATYMER.

LAWRENCY, *of kin to LATYMER and EDITH, formerly betrothed to the latter.*

WALTER VIVIAN, *a ruined Prodigal.*

SIR GRIFFIN MARKHAM,

SIR EDWARD PARHAM,

BROOKE,

FARNINGHAME,

PEYTON,

WATSON, *a Priest.*

BAGOT, *a King's Officer.*

GIOVANNI, *a boy—Page to EDITH.*

HUGH KENSELL, *a Gaoler and Headsman.*

GROSSVELT,

WILHELM,

*Hampshire gentlemen engaged with LATYMER in the Attempt in favour of the LADY ARABELLA STUART.*

EDITH, *an Orphan—Ward of LATYMER, now his wife.*

ETHELIND, *her Attendant.*

MARION, *Daughter of KENSELL.*

*Soldiers, Servants, &c. &c.*

SCENE—*in Hampshire.* TIME—1603.

THE extraordinary event known as "Raleigh's Conspiracy" is too fully chronicled in the page of history to need more than a very brief recapitulation.

It was a plot originating, as it would appear, with the Earl of Northumberland, Lord Cobham, and Sir Walter Raleigh, having for its object the subversion of the existing government, obtaining large supplies of money from foreign states, and (as was generally believed) the exaltation of the Lady Arabella Stuart, cousin-german to the king (James I.), and in the same propinquity to the throne.

A subordinate plot was formed by Sir Griffin Markham, George Brooke (brother to Lord Cobham), and others, urged on by Watson, a Catholic missionary; which, though designed to co-operate with the former, was more immediately directed against the king's person.

The views of the conspirators were encouraged by Count D'Aremberg, ambassador from the Archduke of Austria, who for this purpose employed a certain adventurer, named Matthew de Laurencie, or Lawrencey, by whom the conspiracy was eventually betrayed.

## PREFACE.

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IF, in presenting to my friends the second and amended edition of the “LORDS OF ELLINGHAM,” it be necessary to offer any explanation of the changes it has undergone, I would beg simply to state that the play, on its publication in 1839, was sent to Mr. Macready, by whom it was most flatteringly commended, but deemed unfitted for the stage, owing to the painful nature of the incident on which the plot turned. It was subsequently re-written, and, the objection being obviated, again submitted to the first dramatic censor of the day, who kindly approved, and undertook to present it to the theatre at which he was then performing. This intention being defeated by the premature close of his engagement there, the agreeable prospect of representation at that establishment of which he was about to assume the control, was readily extended. To be brief, a day was at length named, when the luckless play was, by reason of a most unintentional delay on my part, again postponed.

The rest, as Hamlet says, is “silence.”

That influence which *fostered*, if it did not originate, the misunderstanding between Mr. Macready and the writer, which closed all personal intercourse, and there-

with, of course, all dramatic relations, is as unintelligible as it must be unworthy notice or comment.

Having (almost unavoidably) introduced the name of Mr. Macready, I feel bound to add my full persuasion that, under any circumstances but those which have rendered it equally undesirable to confer and accept a favour, he is not the man to abandon a pledge once given, though it were to his own hindrance.

HENRY SPICER.

6 UPPER GROSVENOR STREET,

*February 20, 1843.*

# THE LORDS OF ELLINGHAM.

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## ACT I.

SCENE I.—A ROOM IN THE MANOR-HOUSE OF ELLINGHAM.

LATYMER, EDITH (*in mourning dresses*).

EDITH (*rising suddenly*).

Come, then, I'll smile no more ; and, to say truth,  
'Tis much against my humour. I but sought  
To chase that shadow from your brow, but since  
'Twill not away—I'll be myself again,  
And mournful as you will. Why do you look  
So sadly on me ? (*Goes to him and kneels.*)

Dudley—dearest Dudley !

I can no longer bear those mournful eyes.—  
What says the heart ?

LATYMER (*assuming gaiety*).

That *there* is nought but thee.

What shape of doubt or terror can abide  
Where you are throned ?

EDITH.

Alas ! you play with me  
As with a self-willed and capricious child,  
That must be put with soothing, sugared words  
From some wrong wish. Dear husband, as I would  
Divide thy sweetest thought, oh ! let me share  
The bitter too. Nay, rather give *no* heart,  
Than in one little corner treasure up

A germ of secrecy. Too well I know  
 With whom, and in what fatal bonds, some chance  
 Hath linked your fortunes. Woman as I am,  
 Such humble sense I have, as teaches me  
 That plots like these, with scarce a ground of hope,—  
 Such loose materials—lack of earnest hands—  
 That they can reach no honour—can but lead  
 To loss—disgrace,—perhaps, oh God ! to death !

(Weeps.)

LATYMER.

Alas ! my Edith, I am bound, indeed :  
 Since, if destruction threat this toppling tower,  
 By so much more doth honour bid me pause,  
 Nor by a cowardly desertion make  
 Its ruin sure.

EDITH.

Oh ! Dudley, never dress  
 Grim Treason's mien in hues so false and fair,  
 And call it — honour !

LATYMER.

Edith !

EDITH.

Do not frown.

"Tis for yourself I plead. Your father's dust  
 Demands obedience to his living will ;  
 And if, in heaven, his eye —

LATYMER.

Hold ! spare me, love.

This only can I promise. Two days hence,  
 A secret council of our band is held  
 In the oak-chamber —

[A servant enters and delivers a letter.

LATYMER opens it eagerly.

EDITH.

What ill words have stol'n  
 Your colour thus ? Speak, Dudley.

LATYMER.

Nothing, sweet !  
 That is . . . Ha, ha ! How strangely this strange world's  
 Affairs are jumbled ! Here is—(Aside) Cursed chance !  
 Why tends he hither now ?—(Aloud.) Here is a scroll  
 From our good friend—our playmate Lawrencey.

EDITH.

From Lawrencey ?

LATYMER.

Even so. . . . How now, my love ?  
 Who loses colour now ? You cannot think —  
 Not fear that —

EDITH.

*Fear ! 'Tis true he knows not yet*  
 Our happy fortune — dreams not that this hand,  
 By his wild life — his long neglect — redeemed  
 From a most hateful bond, hath claimed the right  
 To choose its master. *Fear ! I fear not. He*  
 Hath, doubtless, other aims — fresh objects — ties —  
 Myself forgotten, too.

LATYMER (*who has been reading in an agitated manner*).

Forgotten — ha !

Scarcely, methinks. Why, love, the insolent scroll,  
 From end to end, is honied with thy name !  
 Nought else — nought else. . . . "Come quickly" — "gone  
 too long" —  
 (Who told him *that*?) "Star of his hope" — "a heart  
 Unworthy, but still true." Ha, ha ! *Forgotten ?*  
 You are unjust, love, to his memory.  
 Lo ! here again ! "His rose — his pretty Edith" —  
 "His playfellow" — "his" —

EDITH.

Ha !

LATYMER.

Look, what he writes !

"His promised — plighted *bride* !" What ! do I dream ?  
 Are you not mine ?

EDITH.

What power can sever us  
 Till death parts all ? . . . Had he ne'er left me thus,  
 For years unheeded, like a thing he held  
 Not worth the search ; or grasped at will — and used  
 To patch his tattered fortunes — I had still  
 Been thine. Love knows no bond, no counsel, save  
 Its mighty impulse, to select its throne.  
 Mine did so. It is *here* ! (*Embraces LATYMER.*)

LATYMER (*regaining his composure*).

Why, let him come.

We'll welcome, in all cheerful confidence,  
 This sudden visitant, who treads upon  
 The heels of his despatch. Have courage, love ;

Albeit he is our kinsman—trusted with  
 Life-secrets—dearest counsels—soon I hope  
 To need his aid no more. My gentle one,  
 Be thou alone my counsellor, my guide,  
 My bosom's hope and home! Oh! let me learn  
 Some fairer language. I must weary thee  
 With this heart-worship; which, like some old strain,  
 Whose strength and moral in the chorus dwells,  
 Still wanders back to the old passionate tale,—  
*I love thee, and I love thee.*

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II.—A PART OF THE GROUNDS.

*Enter LAWRENCY and VIVIAN as from a journey.*

VIVIAN.

Wherefore this haste? It hath gone near to cost  
 A life. Yon gipsy, whom you dashed aside  
 So fiercely from your rein, will spell, I guess,  
 Few fortunes more. Why, by the mass, she seemed  
 To know thee! Let me see: what was't she said?  
 "The hound of Cecil!"

LAWRENCY (*smiling*).

Said she so? That proves,  
 At least, no skill in witchcraft.

VIVIAN.

I have known  
 Such random shafts tell in the golden ring,  
 If not the bull's eye. "Hound!"—an ugly word.  
 "The hound of Cecil!" Could she, now, discern  
 That warrant in thy bosom, framed against  
 All knaves and traitors, with fit means and power  
 To ferret out such game?

LAWRENCY (*feeling eagerly in his vest*).

The warrant—ha!

What, Grossvelt! Wilhelm!—knaves! (*Enter servants.*)  
 A paper lost!

A scroll of deepest import. Back, and trace  
 The way we entered. Ransack pouch and vest—  
 Cloak-bag and holster!—Fly. (*Exeunt servants.*)

VIVIAN.

What gentle names  
 Are writ in the black scroll?

LAWRENCY.

Dear Latymer,—

Sir Griffin Markham,—the young Farninghame,—  
Bold Brooke,—kind Parham ;—good hearts all.

(Re-enter servants.)

Well—speak—

'Tis found ?—

WILHELM.

So please you, sir, we think 'twas dropped  
At the wood-end. The gipsy—

VIVIAN.

Aye. "Twas there  
You plucked it forth to shew me.

LAWRENCY.

As I live,  
Yon nimble-fingered beldame saw my haste  
To hide the filthy scroll, and drew it forth.  
Away, and seek her out. (Exeunt servants.) Walter, thou  
know'st—(So much you must have gathered from my words—)  
I come no stranger hither. The last lord  
Of these domains was my youth's earliest friend ;  
But cast me from his bosom in the hour  
I most did need protection.

VIVIAN.

In revenge,  
You doom his son to the headsman.

LAWRENCY.

Man—'tis false—

Aye—judge me as thou wilt,—this breast of mine  
Holds yet one generous tenant. There have been  
Sweet moments, when my spirit, like a bird  
Wearied with soaring, flew to nestle here,  
And seek, amid all sweet and peaceful things,  
My little rosy playmate of this wood . . . .  
My love—my Edith !—In the tented field,  
Wrapped but in memory's mantle, I have slept  
The calm, sweet sleep that drew me nearer thee—  
And waking so—when the loud storm shrieked by,  
Armed with the chill mist and the biting wind—  
I did not feel it, Vivian.

VIVIAN.

You are moved.

LAWRENCY.

Vivian—this prize was mine.

VIVIAN.

Was?

LAWRENCY.

Said I so?

Honour and hope rebuke me for that weak,  
Mistrustful word!—*Is* mine!—Her father, Vivian,  
Upon his death-bed, pledged her, with her wealth  
Of untried love, broad lands, and coffered gold,  
To me her kinsman. She was but a child—  
Too young to cavil at the fatal bond  
Her after years refused. She loved me not;  
And was too frank and innocent of soul  
To feed me with false hope. Beneath that roof  
Ten years were wasted—years of doubt and fear—  
That laughed and sorrowed like a various May.  
Still she grew cold—her frown more frequent—smile  
Most chill—and she—Vivian, my patience failed—  
On the strong faith of her dead father's pledge  
I built the temple of my hope—and fled  
For present comfort, to—

VIVIAN.

To Marion. True.

For comfort, ha!—which doubtless, she bestowed.  
Methought the blue-eyed Marion—

LAWRENCY.

Name her not

With insult.

VIVIAN.

I!—Poor girl! . . . . Though injured in  
This proper world's opinion; I respect  
Her truth—her love—her woman's gentleness:—  
Insult her!—No, not I.

LAWRENCY.

I thank you, Vivian . . . .

Yes, Marion loved me. Of my cause of grief,  
She knew not—questioned not. With patient tears  
She wrapped me in her soft, caressing arms,  
As I had been a wayward, peevish babe,  
Upon her breast—and soothed with happy songs  
The fiend that vexed me thus.

VIVIAN.

You did accept  
The love you could not give her?

LAWRENCY.

With each morn  
I swore that ere yon glorious sun had done  
His course, I'd tell her all—yet, eve by eve,  
He touched the crimson chamber of his rest,  
And left the word unspoken. Oft I turned  
With a bold, studied, villain look—and still  
My heart grew sick within—the ungrateful tone  
Died on my severed lips. How could I gaze  
Into those mild—those trustful, piteous eyes—  
And say "*I love thee not*"—how rend apart  
The veil that drooped above my struggling soul,  
And shew her—Edith?—No.

VIVIAN.

Where dwells she now?

LAWRENCY.

With the old brute, her father, gaoler here,  
In Winchester. Enough of this . . . . I would  
'Twere night—all well.

VIVIAN.

What fear you?

LAWRENCY.

Did I say

I feared? . . . . If Latymer—her playmate—. . . nay—  
It were too foul a wrong.

(Crosses to VIVIAN.)

See you not yet

My purpose here? Wherefore I seemed to join  
This idle plot? Why, when I found 'twas known,  
I flew to Cecil, and, for what I told,  
Obtained this honourable spyship? Look,  
*Why* did I this?—To warn them, man—mislead  
The subtle hounds of justice; cast a shield  
Around my Edith's head;—to save her—save  
Dear Latymer, her playmate—give her peace  
For years of anguish—safety for her hate!—  
Life for her frowns!—And I to do this!—I—  
*I*, Vivian. Do you hear? Why do you stand  
So coldly mute, as I were telling thee  
Some old wives' fable? Is 't a blest exchange?  
Sweet vengeance, Vivian?

VIVIAN (*taking his hand*).

Calm yourself, my friend,

It is a generous aim. See—who comes here?  
Our host, in faith.—And the fair dame—what, man—  
You flush—and pale.—Hast ague? Where is now  
The reckless soldier? Come—I shame to see  
Your manhood thus forgotten. Walk aside;  
Anon you'll be yourself.

(*They walk apart.*)

*Enter LATYMER and EDITH attended by GIOVANNI.*

LATYMER (*to GIOVANNI*).

Said he no more?

Yet Parham minces not his words. Again—  
The message.

GIOVANNI.

“ Two days hence, in the oaken room,  
I'll pluck a sweet-voiced, harmless-seeming bird—  
And prove 't a hungry vulture. Let your lord,  
Meanwhile, beware his talons.” (*Retires.*)

EDITH (*eagerly*).

He would say

That Lawrencey is false. What thinks, my lord,  
Of this?

LATYMER.

Or that your pretty page mistook  
The import of his words; or 'tis some jest  
That at our council shall move laughter.—False!  
*He false!*

EDITH.

I would not seem unjust to one  
So close in blood, and once so dear in love,  
But, in my inmost heart, I do mistrust  
His purpose hitherward.

LATYMER.

So do not I.

Be gentler, Edith, with a name ne'er yet  
In pawn to foul dishonour. In this scheme  
None plunged with readier zeal. He is, beside,  
Too lion-like to fear; too proud to steal  
His proper safety from the blood of those  
Who trust him wholly. (*Aside.*) But he's vengeful too;  
And if the love he bore to Edith once,  
Hath on her sire's rash promise rocked itself

To this long rest, and now, awakened, claims  
Its patient hope's reward—

EDITH (*who has been speaking apart to GIOVANNI*).

Thou'rt right. I share

Thy worst misgivings. Do as I have said.

Put life into thine eyes; thy true heart needs  
No added love nor loyalty. (*GIOVANNI retires.*)

LATYMER.

Away,

These shadowy doubts! Come in, sweet wife. Be sure  
All will be well. [*Exeunt LATYMER and EDITH.*

SCENE III.—A SALOON IN THE MANOR-HOUSE.

*Enter LATYMER and EDITH with LAWRENCY.*

LAWRENCY (*aside*).

I would, but cannot, disenchant mine eyes;—  
She chains my gaze upon her. Gods, how fair!  
I knew her lovely,—dreams have limned it so,  
Fancy and memory painted it,—but now,  
O artists feeble and incapable!  
How are ye beggared all!

LATYMER.

These towers, my friend,  
Retain their ancient gloom and majesty.

LAWRENCY (*starting*).

Aye, in Bohemia,—in Bohemia, cousin,—  
'Tis as you say, the—

LATYMER.

Nay, I did not speak  
Of aught beyond our view. My thoughts are less  
Remote than yours, good cousin. Time hath made  
Few changes in the aspect of our home,  
And 'tis no hand of mine shall check and mar  
This pleasant concourse of familiar things.  
There's little change.

LAWRENCY.

I know it. Had a tree  
Sunk down with age, or but a single stone  
Of the old mansion changed its wonted hue,  
Or a new flowerplot fringed the fountain's edge,

I would detect it straight. My thoughts, constrained  
To seek another, not a fairer home,  
Made frequent visits here. Dear Latymer—

[Enter VIVIAN.]

Here is a comrade for whose sake I must  
Bespeak your kindness ; one with whom the world,—  
Or its worst part, hath dealt ungratefully :  
He bears, you see, no malice. On his front  
A generous nature shines. (Aside.) O most demure !  
(He retires abruptly. LATYMER and VIVIAN  
conversing.)

And, smiling priestess, sits thy worship there ?  
Love, who can doubt thine aspect ? whether locked  
In mute lips, and the soft hypocrisy  
Of eyes that droop and wander,—or as *thus*,  
All bare and speaking as an ale-house sign ?  
See how her breath waits on his words—her eye  
Follows the bend of his . . . . . I cannot breathe  
With freedom here. My soul grows dark again—  
I'll hence and walk ; 'twere better far to gaze  
On souls that float in the red streams of hell,  
Than longer on this pair !

[Exit.]

LATYMER.

Hath aught occurred  
In your late travel, that could throw this cloud  
Of discontent athwart my kinsman's brow ?

VIVIAN.

No truly, sir, he ne'er seemed merrier :  
These lovely scenes called many a pleasant hour  
Back to his mind. No warrior to the field,  
Lover to bridal, school-boy to his home,  
Could shew more gamesome mood. Stay, I remember  
Some hag of the forest yonder seized his rein,  
Whom, while she spoke, his restless beast threw down,  
And hurt, I fear ;—'tis like his generous heart  
Dwells on it strongly. What a friend am I ! (Aside.)

Re-enter LAWRENCY.

LAWRENCY.

Your pardon, cousin ; I have ta'en the right  
Of an old friend, to quit you at my will.  
A foe, that I had hoped to leave behind  
In the damp fields of Holland, haunts me still :—  
A sudden faintness, which the calm, fresh air  
Doth quickly medicine. (Aside.) I will try her now.

(To EDITH.) Dear cousin—Edith—*Lady* Edith—madam ! What, is the harp strung with such chilling wires ? I have no heart to touch. (Turns away.)

EDITH.

You spoke, sir ?

LAWRENCY.

Something

To my kind cousin Edith. *Lady, you*  
Have struck it from my mind.

LATYMER.

Come, Lawrency,—

Come, I must have you better friends with one  
Who shared alike our boyish sport and care ;  
Nay, I must fain confess, in frolic still  
The readiest of the three. (Aside.) So grave, my Edith ?  
A word, good master Vivian. (They talk apart.)

LAWRENCY.

Edith . . . . . still

I call you so—for I am slow to learn  
Forgetfulness of deed, or scene, or word,  
That hath been dear . . . . . Am I forgotten, Edith ?  
Is *all* forgotten ?—All the pleasant things  
That we have loved ? the rose-walk and the bower,  
The tale of witch and fairy, conned beside  
The gossiping brook ? . . . . . Nay, an you will or no,  
I'll play the tutor to your memory,  
Which doth put on this dull and careless garb  
In very wilfulness. Thou canst not choose  
But think —

EDITH.

That there is nought in joys like these  
To fill the heart with. Our maturer thought  
Sweeps brightly o'er the mind's expanding scroll,  
And reason on the ready surface writes  
In characters more loved, and lasting too.

LAWRENCY.

Oh, do not,—do not preach so harsh a faith !  
Drag not the fabric down in whose kind shade  
This outcast soul hath hidden from despair,—  
Nor with such cruel sorcery, transform  
Memory's bright gold to ashes. Must the heart  
 Crowd its fair mansions with new tenants, stern  
 And world-polluted, yet refuse its first,—  
 Its innocent guests, a home ? . . . . . Would I had died

Ere wandered back to find such heart as thine  
Turned from its woman's truth and tenderness !

EDITH.

I am not changed ; and since you challenge truth,  
Then blame me not for its unwelcome mien.  
I loved the roses *then*,—I love them now,—  
Armed as they stand, their tiny points shew fair  
And patent to the eye. The fount, the bird,  
Have the same melody so loved of old,  
They cannot pander the sweet gift of song  
To falsehood's purposes. No changeling I,—  
What I have loved, I love ; what hated (and  
Such fault shall lack no advocate in heaven),  
I from my heart abhor : and that is one  
Who hides a dark and treacherous intent  
In pleasant seeming ; sends his malice forth  
Dressed in the robes of friendship.

LAWRENCY (*eagerly*).

Edith !

EDITH (*crosses and gives her hand to VIVIAN*).

Dudley,

Your friends must need refreshment. Will you follow ?

[*Exeunt.*]

LATYMER.

You are not well, my friend. Some inward pang  
Your changing cheek confesses.

LAWRENCY.

Then my cheek  
Shews falsest colours forth. Tut ! I ne'er felt  
So well content, so boisterously gay,  
So much disposed to cast all care aside,  
And give my soul to reckless merriment ;—  
I've song and tale for thee ! We'll e'en be boys  
Again, my cousin ! Come, we loiter, come !

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—A SUMMER PARLOUR.

EDITH alone.

EDITH (*pushes her harp aside*).

I cannot recollect it. It is strange—  
 The perfect melody that haunts my ear  
 Still 'scapes my touch. Something that he hath loved  
 For the first time, forgotten. May this prove  
 No augury!—My heart is ill at ease.  
 Pass but this day in safety, I shall smile,  
 Perchance, at the slight birth of those weak fears  
 That, like o'er-eager sentinels, create  
 A foe in each new object. Who is there?  
 My page!

Enter GIOVANNI.

Well, good Giovanni, have you heard  
 Aught to dispel our doubts?

GIOVANNI.

Madam, this day  
 Shall make all known and sure . . (*Draws nearer*.)  
 There has been talk  
 Of some strange proof dropped from the hands of one  
 Who houses here, that will—

EDITH (*eagerly*).

Now, as you love me—

GIOVANNI.

Love!

My lady!—

EDITH.

Foolish boy—speak . . Why didst start  
 And crimson thus?

Enter LAWRENCY.

LAWRENCY (*pausing at the door*).  
 A word, fair cousin?

EDITH.

Sir,

I listen.

LAWRENCY.

Lady, 'tis a dangerous theme  
And might have claimed attention ; but, perchance,  
A more auspicious hour—

EDITH.

Giovanni—go.

Presently I shall need you.

[*Exit GIOVANNI.*]

LAWRENCY.

Then at once,

Wherefore this studied coldness ? these austere,  
Averted looks ? What fatal hand hath kept  
This icy barrier between hearts ne'er yet—  
Alas ! too dearly tied ? O Edith, now  
That time and grief, rude-handed mediciners,  
Have tamed this stubborn brain to reason's rule,  
Teach me that art which mocks my eager will—  
The power to pleasure thee.

EDITH.

And wilt thou learn ?

LAWRENCY.

As though to win a world.

EDITH.

Why listen then.

For I will test this apt docility.  
Thy palfrey stands within his idle stall ;  
'Tis a stout nag, and swift ; will travel well  
Some twenty miles, ere noon be ripe to-morrow :  
Be thus far on toward the capital ;  
Be silent as to all thou mayst have heard,  
And noted here ; return not for the space  
Of one whole year ;—then will I school my mind,  
Confess that I have judged thee hastily,  
Intreat thy pardon, and bestow—

LAWRENCY (*taking her hand eagerly*).

Speak—speak !

EDITH (*turns away*).

My gratitude and cousinly esteem.

LAWRENCY.

Truly a generous and a prudent pledge !  
Yet do I covet more. For thine own sake—  
For life's—for honour's—for the sake of all  
Thou hold'st as precious—last of all, for *miue*—

Say not "*despair*." Oh, put not to the test  
 The frailty of this heart, nor set at strife  
 Gratitude, mercy, and the love of thee,—  
 Lest that the last prevail. See, Fate has laid  
 Her sharpest weapons ready to my hand,  
 And fair occasion courts me . . . . Nay, no more.  
 Throw this ill-fitting garb of anger by ;  
 Oppose no longer your dead father's will—  
 And, even at mine own peril, these thy friends,  
 Though far advanced in treason's dangerous march,  
 Shall be, by friendly hands, drawn back and saved!  
 Reject me, and they perish, with the boy  
 Whose blood is worth them all. Do not speak yet;  
 Pause on the final doom !

EDITH.

To pause were sin  
 Greater than I can name. Hark ! For my friends,  
 I leave them to their innocence and God ;  
 But for that dearer life you threaten, know  
 He is—my heart throbs proudly at the word !—  
 He is my husband !

LAWRENCY (*starting back*).

Jest not on this theme !

Nay, were it thus—had I been so betrayed—  
 Some rumour must have reached my tortured ear,  
 Ev'n in my land of exile. Speak again ;  
 Say that thou dost but prove me !

EDITH.

It is true ;—

I am his wedded wife.

LAWRENCY (*after a pause*).

And thou canst smile—

Canst speak, with tone unaltered, words that tear  
 The fibres of my heart ! . . . . Art thou a woman ?  
 No—no—her soul's first element is love—  
 Her nature's essence, mercy ! She ne'er turns  
 Her back on the neglected—tramples not  
 Upon the fallen : Honour is her god—  
 And her high creed, how sorely tried soe'er,  
 Forbids to wrong the absent ! . . . . Edith, thou  
 Wert mine, by promise, in the face of Heaven—  
 I ne'er released the bond —

EDITH.

It is too late.

## LAWRENCY.

It is not. To my passion this boy's love  
 Was but a childish dream! O wretch! O thief!  
 That in a brother's absence could'st creep in  
 And steal his toil's reward! Edith, for thee  
 I have risked more than labour. Thou who hast sat  
 Ev'n in mine honour's throne—hast worn the garb  
 Of virtue, woven in angel-looms—whose hand  
 Hath waved the cheering light no cloud could hide,  
 Storm quench, nor danger pale! Have mercy, Edith!  
 Rend off these fatal fetters: mine thou art,  
 And mine, I swear, thou shalt be!

## EDITH.

What is this?  
 Dost thou not know me? Didst not hear my word—  
 The wife of Latymer.

## LAWRENCY.

Hold, torturer!  
 Be still—it burns my soul! I know thee—I—  
 Thou art a felon's bride; and I would save thee  
 From ills thou dar'st not meet in dreams! Come—come—  
 Did I not swear it?

## EDITH.

Either thou art vile  
 Beyond all scorn, or I, most wickedly,  
 Pervert thy meaning. By my hopes of heaven,  
 I blush to spend another word on thee!  
 Yet know, that I disdain thy threatened power,  
 Ev'n as I loathe thy love. (*She retires as he approaches.*)  
 Kneel at my feet,  
 And I will spurn thee as a venomous thing  
 That, in the guise of friendly innocence,  
 Would sting my more than life! Avoid my path,  
 Coward and ingrate!

## LAWRENCY.

These are courteous words;  
 And, for infliction of a deadly wrong,  
 A balm well chosen. Once again, be warned;  
 Send me not from you with these poisonous thoughts  
 Warring upon my reason. Urge me not  
 To madness! . . . . Edith, speak! hast not one word  
 Of comfort?

## EDITH.

None. Pity dwells not with scorn:

I know thee for—a spy! A creature hired  
To traffic in the blood of nobler men :  
And yet, I fear thee not. Be grateful that  
I leave thee thus ; nor bid some vassal's hand  
Chastise this vain presumption.

[Exit.

LAWRENCY.

Ha! ha! ha!

“ Chastise ! ”—“ presumption ! ” . . . . . Mercy ! mercy !  
Heav'n !

Let not this fearful passion burst my brain,  
And thus defraud me of my last dear aim—  
A swift and deep revenge ! . . . . .

(A pause—he looks up suddenly.)

Who spoke to me ?

What shapes are these that float upon mine eyes,  
Glide o'er the landscape, glitter from the tree,  
Inviting as to some rich banquet, each  
With aspect fairer than his fellow ? — Ha !  
With what fell craftiness ye choose your time !  
Such should not tempt in vain ! I know you all,  
Ye smiling fiends and ministers of hell !  
Whence ye arise, and whither lead, I know,  
And who your master. Still, with heart enslaved  
By your surpassing mien, and promise kind,  
I make ye mine, and follow. Come, Revenge ! —  
Come, sweet Revenge ! swift Hope for once outrun.  
From nought I 'll shrink, so 't be but quickly done.

[Rushes out.

## SCENE II.—A RETIRED PART OF THE GROUNDS.

WALTER VIVIAN *reclining listlessly on a bench.*

VIVIAN.

This will not do ; I must shake off this calm  
That steals, like some deceitful foe, on one  
Whose life is action. Yet 'tis sweet : above,  
Blue sleeping skies ; and in mine ears alone,  
The brooklet's distant murmur, or the buzz  
Of summer insects. . . . . Would I were a fly !  
A soft and gentlemanly life he leads,  
With not on earth a duty or a care,

Save to make music to the flowers, and take  
 Their honey for his pains. With day he dies :  
 Night is too chill for his luxurious ease—  
 Too rough for his gentility. Heigho !  
 Who would not be a fly ? This sword, whose weight  
 I ne'er yet felt, grows ponderous to my hand  
 As any ploughshare. Pooh ! my very thoughts  
 Grow rustic now !

*Enter LAWRENCY, in a disordered manner ; he paces up  
 and down, as not noticing VIVIAN.*

Companion !—Hola !

LAWRENCY.

Ha !

Thou here ?

VIVIAN.

Aye ; what has happened ? What contains  
 The scroll you crush so madly ?

LAWRENCY.

Lost—lost—lost !

The prize long hoped—long promised—gone ! O Walter !  
 Was 't thou that jested at our travel's speed ?  
 Alas ! the horses should be winged at heel,  
 That must out-gallop human treachery !

VIVIAN.

She hath refused ?

LAWRENCY.

*Refused !—A puling boy,*  
 A whining, sickly minion, of whose life,  
 Till three days past, I took nor thought nor heed,  
 Hath snatched my prize as you would thistle-down,  
 And whiffed it from me. Her own lips pronounced  
 The fatal truth. I wept—I kneeled—I prayed—  
 I know not what—for I was mad ! She bent  
 Upon me eyes that flashed disdain and rage,  
 And left me with a threat, that . . . . Well—'t is well—  
 I woo another now, dear Vivian—one  
 Whom thou must help me to. I did not think  
 So soon to need thy promised aid. Take this.

*(Gives a scroll.)*

I would have written something, but can trace  
 No characters that man may read. Mine eyes  
 Dazzle and throb—beneath my writhing hand  
 The letters turn to blood ! Now, pray you, hence—  
 Take my good horse, grey Champney, and away !

George Bagot lies at Mallwood with his troop,  
Not ten miles hence—away !

VIVIAN.

My mission first ?

What must I do ?

LAWRENCY.

Oh, pardon. In this scroll—  
It bears the seal of Cecil — thou wilt write  
The names of Griffin Markham, Farninghame,  
Brooke, Peyton, Parham, and — and — *Latymer* !  
To-night the witch of Discontent doth hold  
High council here ; and hither come her sons,  
In strange disguises, as their fancies teach ;  
Fitter for morrice-dance than council grave,  
For masque than murder ! Choicest plotters they !  
Oh, I could laugh, but for a demon thought  
That burns me, here. . . . . Let Bagot draw his men  
About the door, and, when my rapier falls,  
Unleash thy bloodhounds, and secure them !

VIVIAN.

All !

LAWRENCY.

All I have named. Dost understand me ?

VIVIAN.

Aye ;

But I have ate and drank with Latymer,  
Looked in his heart, and now, to hang him ! — Think  
Of the poor girl, too ! Nay, my conscience shuns  
This act of —

LAWRENCY.

Stern justice, thou would'st say :

I'll help thee to the word. Tax as thou wilt  
My grateful friendship. Glut thyself with gold —  
Make life a revel — sit in Luxury's lap —  
Play with coy Fortune's golden tresses — and  
Thy *friends*, that bowed them to the noonday sun,  
But shunned its setting, thou — dost mind me ? ha ! —  
Wilt now reward them ?

VIVIAN.

Sir, enough : your slave.

[Exit.

LAWRENCY.

So the dark play begins. . . . . With every pulse  
I feel my nature change. What darksome spell —

What fearful spirit is at work within,  
 When even external objects do partake  
 Its horrid seeming? . . . . Edith, 'tis thy deed!  
 Not mine—no—no—not mine!

[Exit.]

## SCENE III.—THE OAKEN CHAMBER.

LATYMER, FARNINGHAME, PEYTON, BROOKE, SIR GRIFFIN  
 MARKHAM, and others, carelessly disguised, sitting as  
 in deliberation.

FARNINGHAME.

Pshaw! tell me not. An 'twere not for the pity  
 To strike one link from out so fair a chain  
 Of fellowship, it were but just to move  
 The name of Matthew Lawrence be marked  
 Within our list, as lukewarm in the cause  
 Of honour and of truth. Believe me, sirs,  
 I like it not. Spite of his pleasant mien,  
 I hold him far too close and crafty—*far*,  
 To trust our necks withal.

PEYTON.

And, by the chain  
 Wherewith thine own is compassed, thou, methinks,  
 Valu'st it over cheaply. Has't, perchance,  
 Escaped thy wisdom, that thou art not *now*  
 Lord of the hall and bower in Farninghame,  
 But simply Hob the ploughman? At what tryst  
 Didst buy thy gew-gaw?

FARNINGHAME.

Spanish leather boots,  
 Bright-gilded spurs, and jewel-hilted dagger,  
 Make an apt finish to a butcher's frock  
 And rusty beaver! I will be so bold,  
 Worshipful wielder of the axe and steel,  
 To bid thee doff such tell-tale braveries,  
 And leave them in the shambles.

PEYTON.

Gentle swain,  
 Most rustic Damon —

FARNINGHAME.

Good sheep-slaughterer,  
 Tempt not thy bullock's fate, or —  
 [They rise and draw.]

MARKHAM (*interposing*).

Ha! how now?

Here is a coil betwixt two honest men,  
The butcher and the boor! Our friends have yet  
To learn disguises. We, who breathe in courts,  
We are sworn masquers. The world finds us ever  
What we would be, not what we *are*.

BROOKE (*aside to FARNINGHAME*).

Lo! now

Sir Griffin Markham (fifteenth page of state,  
Deputy-usher of the queen's back stairs,)  
Mounts his court palfrey. You shall hear anon  
The very words the Lady Clarice Mayne  
Whispered the duchess in the presence-chamber,  
That made her stiff grace smile. Wouldst know how oft  
The king caressed his poodle? He will tell you  
These news, and more; and for all rumours—'Sooth,  
Commend me to these know-all, who know nothing;  
Who skim the airy froth of circumstance,  
But leave the cream behind.

FARNINGHAME.

Our scale is light—

Be thankful to the very butterfly  
That perches on the beam. (*Aloud.*) But this is strange.  
The trysting time is past; yon empty seat  
Doth augur badly for our brotherhood.  
What, can the blossoms of our sprouting tree  
Drop off so quickly?

BROOKE.

'Twas my own remark,  
And, Latymer, I tell thee to thy beard,  
Thou nursest carelessly our infant cause.  
I do mistrust this friend of D'Aremberg,  
Whoe'er he be.

LATYMER.

Rest you contented, sir;  
If freely I confide to this man's hand  
My life—as deeply gaged as any here—  
Why, so may you.

*Enter LAWRENCY speaking to one without.*

LAWRENCY.

I tell thee, sirrah, no;  
Hence—I will do thy message. Cousin Dudley,  
Here was some man of thine before the door—

A most importunate knave—who would intrude  
Upon these worthy gentlemen, to bring  
A pressing embassy from thy fair *bride*.

LATYMER.

From Edith?—ha!

LAWRENCY.

That thou must keep in mind  
To ride with her to-morrow, else she would  
Believe—something, I know not what—

PEYTON.

To business.

Now, may no half-heart friends delay our deeds,  
Nor discord mar our councils. Let us first  
Consult our letters. What says D'Aremberg?

BROOKE.

Marry, but little to the point. He writes  
As if the paper were red-hot, and he  
Dreaded to burn his fingers. A wise hound  
That doth not care to open till the game  
Be fairly sprung!

FARNINGHAME.

A moment, gentlemen;  
There is a little custom—a mere form—  
'Tis only a mere form—grace before meat:  
Best not undone. Our new ally, who deigns,  
At length, to fill his seat, hath not yet ta'en  
Our wonted pledge. How say you?

*Enter hastily, at a side door, one closely muffled.*

LATYMER.

Watson! Then

Is danger near.

WATSON.

Nay, brothers; I am here  
To quicken, not to quench, your noble zeal  
In our fair lady's cause. Pray you, sit down,  
While briefly I unfold a project framed  
By those you wot of, but which your own hands  
Must render perfect. Ten days hence, the king  
Will hunt at Hanworth. Shall we, too, be there,  
And pay our homage?

MARKHAM.

How!—unbidden?

WATSON.

Aye,

And unexpected, and unwished. The king  
 At Hanworth hunts the deer, but *we* will hunt  
 The king.\* The royal hart once snared, we make  
 Our own conditions with the meaner herd ;  
 Exalt our gentle lady ; set men free  
 To worship as their conscience will ; and work  
 Our full revenge on Hume and Cecil. Speak,  
 Like you the sport ?

(*A silence.*)

MARKHAM.

Why—*aye*—though some might doubt  
 Its due enjoyment. 'Faith—'tis well conceived.  
 How rides the king attended ?

WATSON.

With a band  
 Of thirty yeomen-foresters. Of these,  
 Some are our own ; the rest, but lightly armed  
 With hunting-spear and knife, will scarce resist  
 Determined onset. What, my friends ! ye pause,  
 As I had bade you to besiege the Tower,  
 Not take a summer's ride ! Well—well—enough—  
 We'll talk of this again. Now hear the tale  
 Of high rewards that wait on our success.

BROOKE.

The schedule framed by Raleigh ?

WATSON.

Aye, 'tis here :  
 And you will find that he whose name should stand  
 The foremost there, hath claimed no meed but honour.  
 Unto myself has fall'n the lot which claims  
 My best of service, Lord High Chancellor ;  
 The noble Cobham's kinsman, Master Brooke,  
 Lord Treasurer of England ; next to him,  
 Sir Griffin Markham, versed in court intrigue.—  
 Quick in resources—who so fit as he  
 For our State Secretary ? Last, not least,  
 The good Lord Grey, our Master of the Horse,  
 England's Earl Marshal.†

[*During this speech SIR EDWARD PARHAM has entered and placed himself opposite to LAWRENCY.*

\* With this hopeful scheme, called, in the language of the initiated, the "bye-plot," Raleigh and Cobham had no connexion, but doubtless would have entertained it as a *pis aller*.

† The arrangements actually proposed.

PARHAM.

There's one other post,  
And much I marvel that the highest of all  
Be left untenanted.

WATSON.

What, sir, is that?

PARHAM.

The office, sir, of—hangman! Gentlemen,  
If I mistake not, we shall have quick need  
Of such a functionary. I, too, beg  
To read my schedule.

(*He produces a paper, which LAWRENCY snatches and tears.*)

Matthew Lawrency,

Thou art a traitor and a villain! (*All rise in confusion.*)

MARKHAM.

How!

A Judas here?—The soft-faced flatterer!  
How well he played his part! and yet, methinks,  
He hath not lived at court.

PARHAM.

Now hear me, sirs;  
While here you sit, dispensing place and pay,  
Honours and titles—by this gentleman  
Our lives are bought and sold. Look here! sirs, here!  
(*Points to the writing.*)

From this torn witness we may gather still  
What will convict a traitor. Seize the spy!  
Pluck down the base informer! 'Tis but choice—  
Our lives or his. . . . (*They advance upon LAWRENCY.*)

LAWRENCY (*aside, irresolute.*).

They prick me to the verge.  
A leap—and over! Edith!—I must gulp  
The hellish potion. . . . Back, sirs!—I can use  
My sword, if needed. (*They press him.*)

Rash and headstrong fools!  
Your blood upon your heads!

(*Strikes down PARHAM's rapier. The door is forced open, and BAGOT rushes in with soldiers.*)

BAGOT.

Swords, gentlemen!  
Secure that window—let no bird escape—  
A brimming trapful!

PEYTON (*to the guard*).

Let me pass, good friends.

Alack ! I knew not what disloyal mouths  
I came to measure for to-morrow's feast.

BAGOT.

Good master butcher, stay—not quite so fast—  
Let us not lose your worship's company !  
The Tower hath roomy offices. Ho, sirs !  
Let him not pass—him in the fisher's frock !—  
'Tis Griffin Markham !

MARKHAM.

Ha ! you know mine air ?

Know too, sir soldier, we who breathe in courts  
Can do the sword-play !

(*Draws.*)

LATYMER.

Are we in the toils ?

Let's prove the birds have talons then. Come on !  
Draw, friends, and try the temper of your steel ;  
Rapier to partisan !

(*All draw.*)

BAGOT.

Hold—hold—hot boy !  
For your brave father's sake, whose loyal heart  
Death spared this bitter pang, I will not drench  
His ancient hall in blood. Our threefold force  
Spurns all resistance. Drop your rebel swords :  
Trust your king's mercy, rather than contend  
Idly against his justice.

PARHAM (*to the guards, who secure them*).

Careless hounds !

Ye are fit tools of justice, thus to leave  
The better part undone. What ! stands he there ?

(*Pointing to LAWRENCY.*)

The master-spirit of our enterprise,  
Watching the tower his own false fingers planned,  
Drop on the builders' heads ?

BAGOT.

The list of those  
Whose practices have drawn the wakeful eye  
Of justice on them, shews me not the name  
Of him you mention.

FARNINGHAME (*to LATYMER*).

Hear you that, my friend ?

Now own me for a prophet.

*Enter VIVIAN.*

VIVIAN (*aside to LAWRENCY*).

You were slow

In giving signal.

LAWRENCY.

Man, 'twas done. Less close —

Quick eyes observe us.

BAGOT.

Gentlemen, I must

Complete my office. Such kind care as may

Render the time less galling, shall be yours

Where I command. Lead on.

(*As they are led out LATYMER pauses, and beckons*

LAWRENCY.)

LATYMER.

Cousin, a word —

Closer — come closer ; fix thine eyes on mine.

A dark suspicion rests upon thee ; tongues

Have freely used thy name : but I am slow

To see the cloud I would not, and prefer,

By greater love, and fuller trust, to shame

A fleeting honour back. Think what is *there* !

A thing how loved — how fair — how friendless — how

Unused to sorrow's sting. I think thee honest ;

I know that thou 'rt a man. Thou 'lt watch this treasure ?

Thou 'lt guard her with all truth and tenderness ?

And soothe and strengthen when my danger comes ?

For well I know there's danger. In a word —

All vile suspicion spurned like hate aside —

I give her to thine arms, a gem to be

Returned me here, as pure ; or else, redeemed

With added grace, in heaven.

LAWRENCY.

Cousin, I take

The gracious pledge, and will defend it so

That when thou 'rt free, thou shalt suspect no more,

But know me — as I am. (*To BAGOT.*) Sir, with your leave,

I 'll journey with you. I 'll to London too,

And there partake the fortune, good or ill,

Of my dear friend and cousin, Latymer.

BAGOT.

Your presence may be needed. Much I hope

This boyish plot may finish, as it ought,

Rather in jest than blood.

[*Exeunt all but LAWRENCY and VIVIAN.*

VIVIAN.

Was it well managed ?

LAWRENCY.

The most diligent fiend  
In Satan's train, could make no better speed,  
Were a lost soul just turning back to heav'n  
That had been deemed secure. "Tis done—no more—  
I bargained with thee, not for praise, but gold :  
Thou shalt not lose thy hire.

VIVIAN.

How!—pitiful!

Wast thou not mocked—and—

LAWRENCY.

Give me thine hand, good friend ;  
'Tis very true. What strange forgetfulness!  
Yes, I was mocked ; thank God that *I was* mocked,  
Insulted, spurned ! I know thou dost not heed  
My sometimes churlish speech ; no, no, thou dost not,—  
Thou'rt my good friend : come on, we'll follow them.\*

[*Exeunt.*

\* It is chiefly on the authority of Sanderson that Lawrency is believed to have betrayed the conspiracy. I may here mention that as the name of Lawrency is so spelt by most of the historians, I have adopted the mode, although it should, in all probability, be written La Renzy.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

## ACT III.

SCENE I.—A CELL IN THE OLD GAOL OF WINCHESTER.

LATYMER, *conducted by HUGH KENSELL and others.*

LATYMER.

Shew me thy lantern, friend ; scant light is here  
 For one whose footsteps are not wont, like thine,  
 To probe so deeply the mysterious paths  
 Delved in earth's bosom.

KENSELL.

When you quit them, sir,  
 Light may be yet more odious. Randolph, see  
 Those rivets sure.

LATYMER.

How, fellows ! you mistake ;  
 Such fetters are not forged for manly limb,  
 And shall not hang on mine.

KENSELL.

Your office, sirs !  
 Heed you a snarling cur, that hath no teeth  
 To back his puny rage ? Up with him straight ;  
 Secure, but not too close. Give room to reach  
 The couch. Ay, ay ; let no tight tether mar  
 His soft repose.

(As they secure him, enter MARION with a basket.)

MARION (passing near LATYMER).

Be patient, sir.

KENSELL.

'Twill do.

What, dainty mistress, you have brought some food  
 To make our new guest welcome ! What hast here ?

(Examining the basket.)

Rich cates—and wine ! You have been dreaming, wench.  
 Black bread and water is the traitor's fare.

MARION.

Pardon, my father ; he is gently bred ;  
 Has had soft nurture.—

KENSELL.

Wilt thou school me, girl?

Nay, take the hint: begone!

MARION (*aside to him*).

Beseech you, sir—

KENSELL (*with sudden rage*).

What, minion! dare you answer me?

(*He seizes her by the hair*.)

LATYMER.

Hands off,

Old savage! would you kill her? Every hair  
You grasp is worth thy carcass. Could I reach thee—  
Curse on these chains!—release her, brute!

KENSELL.

Rail on,

This warmth of passion will be curb'd anon;  
The crawling cell-damp hath a wondrous knack  
At curing sudden tempers. Look, sir boy,  
How much Hugh Kensell fears your worship's rage!

(*Offers to strike MARION*.)

Enter LAWRENCY.

LAWRENCY (*seizes MARION from him*).

How now, black Hugo! at thy favourite sport?  
Old keeper of hell-gates; are scourge and chain  
The only music grateful to thy soul?  
Shame on you, coward! What, art muttering?  
Hither, you growling ruffian!

(*Whispers KENSELL, who withdraws sullenly to the back of the cell*.)

My poor girl!

Nay—nay—be comforted.

MARION.

My heart is full—

I will go in and watch by my poor child,  
And thou wilt come to me?

LAWRENCY.

Aye, I will come;  
But I have business with my kinsman, which  
'T were cruel to delay. He needs a friend  
As well as thou. What cheer, good cousin?—Nay,

[*Exit MARION*.]

What have we here? (*Examining LATYMER's chains*.)  
Our pleasant-visaged friend!  
Doth thy profession no auxiliars own

Of fairer mould than these? Unlock them straight;  
Thou dost exceed thy duty.

(KENSELL *brings a light chain.*)

LATYMER.

It is well;

And now my limbs have space and strength to move,  
Keep thou beyond their range. Welcome, my friend.

LAWRENCY.

Sit down, dear cousin; I must talk with thee.  
And—Get thee hence, old ban-dog; what dost here,  
Thine office once performed? [Exit KENSELL.]

LATYMER.

By what strange spell  
Dost awe yon savage thus?

LAWRENCY.

The love of life.  
There's blood upon his soul, and well he knows  
I have his secret. He hath, strangely too,  
A daughter fair and gentle; for her sake  
He shall not hang—Enough! Thou wouldst inquire  
Of Edith?

LATYMER.

I but hover round my mark,  
Dreading to strike at knowledge which may fix  
Fresh sadness here; yet, speak.

LAWRENCY.

When first aroused  
From out the kind oblivion which affords  
Hearts breathing-time, she gave herself to grief  
That awed all comfort dumb. She took no food,  
Nor slept; but paced from hall to hall, and sighed  
In answer to their echoes. Then her mood  
Changed, and the mourner thenceforth wore her grief  
With proud calm constancy, as if wound up  
To some fixed aim—

LATYMER.

Ha!

LAWRENCY.

Dudley, she is here!—  
In Winchester—at hand!

LATYMER (*impatiently*).

Wherefore at hand,  
And not upon my breast?

LAWRENCY.

Alas, my cousin,  
That were not wise. Our Edith has prevailed  
With certain of our faction (men on whom,  
And on their plans, most jealous eyes are nailed)  
To meet in silence, and with sudden force  
Attempt your rescue !

LATYMER.

It were worse than vain—  
A fatal rashness. How then shall we stay  
Their purpose ?

LAWRENCY.

There I cannot counsel you,  
Since they mistrust me — Stay—a letter, cousin ;  
Write words of comfort ; bid her note how things  
That bow them to the sweeping storm, rise up  
With fresher state. Tell her how dear is life—  
(Be earnest there) ; and bid her seek to save  
By swift compliance, patience, gentleness,  
Rather than dangerous schemes. Had she a friend —

LATYMER.

Who but thyself ? What ! gave I not this gem  
Unto thy guardianship ; and thou, false friend,  
Forsak'st the trust so soon ?

LAWRENCY.

So speed me, Heav'n !  
As I will never leave to guard this prize,  
Ev'n as it were mine own ! (Aside.) As soon it shall be.  
I must depart, my cousin ; but will leave  
A trusty friend, to whom thou mayst confide  
The letter. So, take comfort.

LATYMER.

Aye—Farewell !

And thanks for this most friendly counsel, cousin.

[*Exit* LAWRENCY, LATYMER enters the inner cell.

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SCENE II.—A MEANLY FURNISHED ROOM IN THE  
GAOLER'S HOUSE.

MARION *watching by her child.*

MARION.

He's quiet now — that restless cry no more

Grates on my heart—the bright unhealthy rose  
Is paling. Gentle, kind physician, sleep,—  
What balm can equal thine?

(*Sings, in a low tone, a melancholy song.*)

Out on my tongue!

I know not why this discontented strain,  
This silly rhyme, should haunt me ever thus,  
When I'd be merry. There's a time for grief,  
And that is when the loved are far away,  
Not looked for momently. There is a time  
For joy, and that—oh, *that* is when kind looks  
And treasured words, like visitors who know  
How welcome is their coming, boldly knock  
At Memory's mansion. In, sweet guests, come in!  
There's room for all. And have I not, beside,  
Good hope that *he* will grant the boon that now  
I put to issue?

(*Bends over her child, and sings again as if unconsciously.*)

Enter LAWRENCY.

LAWRENCY.

What! so doleful, Marion?

Hast not a merrier—

MARION (*running to him*).

Hush, dear Lawrency;

The baby sleeps at last. The fever fit  
Hath worn him sadly. Heaven be praised thou'rt come:  
I've much to say to thee.

LAWRENCY.

Then quickly, girl;—  
I must away again:—my horses wait.

MARION.

First look upon the little slumberer;  
Soft—soft—I pray you; if you knew the pains  
To win him to this sleep . . . . O Lawrency,  
Looks he not lovely?

LAWRENCY (*in a low voice*).

Ah, what ill hast *thou*,  
My little folded rosebud, at thy core,  
That paints thy leaf so dimly? Fade, my flower!  
Best fruit of earth—better thou should'st be worn  
On angel breasts, than here. (*Turns away.*)

I'll harm thee not  
With prayer or blessing.

## MARIION.

Sweet, my boy, sleep on—  
 My darling heart.—(*To LAWRE.*) Wilt thou not rest awhile?  
 Look, I'll sit here—(*Places herself at his feet.*)  
 And lean this throbbing brow  
 Upon thy knee. I would not see thine eyes,—  
 For if I looked and found rejection there,  
 'Midst the wild tumult of my eager hope,  
 Methinks 't would kill me.

## LAWRENCY.

Tears, poor child? Come, come,  
 Out with this dreadful tale. Hast stol'n a cake,  
 And had a whipping?

## MARIION.

Mock not at my woes,  
 For that were worse than still to suffer them;—  
 I am most wretched. Take me from this place;  
 And keep the pledge you gave.

## LAWRENCY.

Pshaw! the old tale,—  
 The weary, sad old tale.

## MARIION.

Alas! alas!  
 Thou know'st not half the misery I bear.  
 My father hates me, Lawrency. 'Tis true—  
 That sense, which in the sternest parent's heart  
 Hath some dominion, hath been changed to gall,—  
 To scorn,—to loathing. Foul, contemptuous words,  
 And blows, less hard to bear. Look here—and here,—  
 These arms you praised for whiteness,—you will scarce  
 Say so again. These tangled locks you called  
 So bright and soft, now rudely rent away  
 In his fierce anger. Worse than that—O God!  
 My child,—he struck my child,—ev'n as it stretched  
 Its little arms, and would have flown to him  
 Had he permitted. Pity—I can bear  
 This weary hope no longer!

## LAWRENCY.

It is well;  
 Thou shalt not. Know then, thou canst never be  
 My lady-wife. But, for that silken snare  
 Which binds so many discontented hearts,  
 I'll give thee gold,—I'll give thee what must—Well?  
 Why dost thou turn so pale, and clutch mine arm?

MARION.

Forgive me ; I am faint—I scarcely think  
I understand you—

LAWRENCY.

When, in former days,  
I talked of *love*, thou wast not wont to be  
So slow of comprehension. Plainly then,  
Thou hast no longer hold upon my heart,  
Save for thy pity—yes, girl—for thy love,—  
Thy truth—thy patience—sweet, enduring faith—  
I'd still reward thee. I am not ungrateful—  
I will protect thee, Marion—nay, I will—  
But in the narrow and blind path I climb,  
Not both may stand—and if thou meet'st me there  
I dash thee headlong. Dost thou heed my words ?  
If thou didst love me—Marion—

MARION.

*If!*—I love

Thee more, because grown out of love with sin.  
O, therefore, hear me. Armed with honesty,  
We may defy the stings of outward ill,—  
Yea, laugh to scorn the malice of the world,  
And teach it envy. Load the heart with guilt,  
And the calm look of an unconscious babe  
Can set the cheek on fire. Make me not pray  
For death, to save me from my own child's eye.  
Methinks I see him bend his blushing brow  
Upon my grave, and hear him cry, “O mother !  
Hadst thou no heritage but shame to leave  
Thy wretched offspring ?”

LAWRENCY.

Cling not to me thus ;—

I like it not. Marion, I bid you rise.  
Fond girl, thou should'st have known my nature more  
Than to believe my purpose might be swayed  
By such a whining homily as this.

MARION (*springing up wildly*).

Another voice, another look than mine  
Must force a passage to this stony heart  
Yet newly closed ! Come, little advocate,—

(*She takes the child.*)

Fail thou, we 're lost indeed. Hush, darling, hush,—  
'Tis nothing . . . . Look upon this cherub face—  
The blue eye glistening through the half-formed tear,

The tiny fingers in each other twined,  
 As some sweet angel prompted him to join  
 His wretched mother's prayer. Canst thou refuse  
 So innocent a pleader? Take us hence;  
 Leave us in scorn, disgrace, and poverty,—  
 But, oh, not *here*!

LAWRENCY (*his head averted, waves her from him*).

Away! I cannot—Heav'n!  
 Must I bear this? Woman—have mercy—Hence!  
 Thou wilt not?

MARION (*clasping him*).  
 Never—never!

LAWRENCY (*forcing himself from her*).  
 Stubborn girl—

Selfish and wilful. Since thou wilt not take  
 The offered good, bear with thy slavish lot,—  
 The menial of thy felon-father's board,—  
 Theme of his brutal jests.—If this thou lik'st not,  
 Then starve,—and die!

[*Exit.*

MARION.

My child—my child—my child!

Is this the end? There, to thy rest again,  
 My bird . . . . O heart, unwilling heart, to see  
 The cause of this rejection! He has looked  
 Upon a nobler head—a fairer face—  
 A merrier heart than this grief-stricken one.  
 Ha! he hath roused a feeling in my soul  
 I knew not slept there. Rest, my gentle child;  
 'Tis well thou canst not judge thy mother's thought,  
 That leans above. We will be both avenged!

[*Scene closes.*

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SCENE III.—IN A HOUSE NEAR WINCHESTER.

EDITH—ETHELIND.

ETHELIND.

Your journey, madam, squared not with the will  
 Of Master Lawrency?

EDITH.

The eager zeal  
 With which he did oppose it gave more strength  
 To my resolve. Clothed with some secret power,

He sways our destiny ; and 't is no shame  
To say I fear him. Yet I would not stay—  
Ha ! here at last ? Leave us, good Ethelind.

*Enter LAWRENCY attended. Exit ETHELIND.*  
What of my husband ?—Speak—Hast seen him ?—Hath  
He sent for me ? Speak, Lawrency, and say  
How fares my lord.

LAWRENCY (*to attendant*).

Some wine :—my throat is parched.  
EDITH.

One word, I pray you.

LAWRENCY.

Let me ne'er bestride  
Yon dapple more ; she flung at every bush,  
As if a lion couched there. I would know  
When Master Vivian comes. [*Exeunt attendants.*]

EDITH.

Oh, wilt not answer ?

LAWRENCY.

Ha ! lady, what with me ?

EDITH.

With thee ! Alas !  
Much—very much. I'd have thee render back  
A perilled life—I'd have thee to uncoil  
A clinging viper from thy heart, whose sting  
Hath else eternal power—I'd have thee wash  
From thy stained soul the wrong that thou hast done,  
In making merchandise of the dear blood  
Of thy familiar friend !

LAWRENCY.

I marvel what  
The suit may be to which these kindly taunts  
Are but the prelude.

EDITH.

Pardon—pardon me !  
Grief doth not pause to measure courtly phrase—  
Speaks but its soul. Give me my lord again.

LAWRENCY (*after a pause*).

How, lady ! are these clasped and suppliant hands  
The same that waved me from thy presence once,  
With such a royal scorn ? Are these the eyes,  
All humid now with bright and harmless showers,  
That scathed me with their lightning ? This the voice  
That, when I murmured of my passionate love,

Willed me to take my palfrey and depart,  
And I should have thy gratitude? Nay, come;  
I fear me 't is but mockery. Alack!  
You will be tyrant still.

EDITH.

Is this an hour,  
A theme for jesting? Lawrency, thy heart  
Was noble—is so—might that voice be heard  
That passion did outrail. Oh, hear me; grant  
My prayer.

LAWRENCY.

I will.

EDITH (*joyfully*).

Ah! then I did thee wrong.  
Forgive me—oh, forgive me.—Thou shalt win  
A gift no gold may purchase—that sweet peace  
That self-approval brings.

LAWRENCY.

Come, this is well.

No thanks: I do my portion, richly paid  
By this most blissful moment. Thus we seal  
Our mutual compact. Now thou'rt mine, indeed.

(*Advancing as if to embrace her, she starts back.*)

EDITH.

It cannot be;—thou dost not mean it. Say  
Thou dost not mean it! Listen, Lawrency,—  
Thou stand'st this moment where the paths divide  
To good and evil: choose the right, nor make  
The devils blush at thine excelling sin.  
I tell thee, could I list such fearful terms,  
The sacrifice were vain, for *he* would cast,  
In hate and scorn, the worthless life away,  
Bought at such price!

LAWRENCY (*after a pause—gazing at her*).

'T will be a sorry sight,  
When some dark locks we wot of are beheld  
Wreathing the hangman's fingers! When low hinds,  
While homeward wending from their honest toil,  
Gaze on the blackening features, and cry, "See  
The bloody traitor's doom!" while mothers raise  
Their whimpering brats to touch the scaffold's rim,  
And bid them love their king.

EDITH.

O God! no more!

## LAWRENCY.

And yet she loved! Alack! a flimsy thread  
 Is woman's love—a toy—a summer thing—  
 Of flowers, and sunshine, and the poet's dream!  
 Lo! how the winter of self-sacrifice  
 Doth chill it to the core!

## EDITH.

My life for his:  
 If not—accuse me. Let me die with him.

## LAWRENCY.

*Thee*, my sweet friend? Methinks our gallant king  
 May well forgive so fair a foe all harm  
 Her power might work him. Patience, gentle one;  
 Remember thou thyself art here arraigned  
 For a great crime: thy cruelty to one  
 Who loved thee—ah! how well!

## EDITH.

Hold, sir.—Here end  
 This devilish mockery! Love I cannot give:  
 It dwells within a cold and dreary cell,  
 Bound to the fettered prisoner with a tie  
 Stronger than chains. Hatred itself might blush  
 To plant a scorpion on his couch of stone—  
 Or quench the last lone spark that cheers the night  
 Of his soul's darkness? Take my gold, I pray thee—  
 My land—my jewels—I will be thy slave—  
 Thy mistress, *never*!

## LAWRENCY.

I have slaves already,  
 Or what will make them so. I want thy love—  
 Thee—and thy love. Look you, I jest no more.  
 Be mine thou shalt! Ay, sweetheart, never dream  
 That thine accursed minion can escape  
 My vengeance. Know that, though the headsman miss,  
 My hatred shall be fed.

## EDITH.

Dost thirst for blood?  
 My bosom woos thy dagger. This black sin  
 I will not do.

## LAWRENCY.

Then *thou* hast murdered him,  
 And from henceforth upon thy stubborn head  
 Lie this young traitor's blood. (Going—returns.)

If one hour hence.

Thou dost relent—

EDITH.

Away! I heed thee not—

I know not what thou speakest. Go! thy words  
Make a strange senseless murmur in mine ear;  
My soul rejects their meaning. Tempter,—hence!

[*Exit* LAWRENCY. EDITH remains motionless,  
*absorbed in grief, till VIVIAN enters.*

VIVIAN.

Madam, my master,—that is, I would say  
My friend,—desired me bring this loving scroll  
To your fair hand; 't is from your lord—

(EDITH snatches it eagerly.)

And say

That—but you chid him hence—he would have told  
Much that had giv'n you comfort—what calm cheer  
Marked the discourse—

EDITH.

Not see me?—Do I read  
The words aright? Bid me return, and leave  
My husband fenced with foes. Have I not sworn  
To cheer and tend him through all grief and pain,  
Ev'n as we shared our love? And now depart,  
Nor through the windows of his dungeon, bend  
One parting look on him? Alas! what hour  
So much demands the duty he disdains?  
Speak, sir,—I cannot read this riddle,—speak;  
Canst thou?

VIVIAN.

If my poor judgment may presume,  
He knows his safety best. Doth he not write  
Of love,—of pardon, duty, gentleness?  
Nay, says he not his life's salvation rests  
On thy most prompt obedience?

EDITH.

Ay, 't is so,  
Ev'n so 't is written. Heaven—my footsteps guide!  
As he can scarce test that obedience more. . . . .  
I am ready at your pleasure. [*Exit.*

*Re-enter* LAWRENCY.

LAWRENCY.

Bravely done,  
Shrewd second! Let not this consenting mood

Change by delay. To-morrow we'll set forth  
 For those broad lands, which, fairly confiscate,  
 Shall call me lord. For our caged bird, all's safe;  
 We are not like to hear his note again;  
 Hugh Kensell is his keeper. Would'st thou more?

[*Exeunt.*]

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SCENE IV.—THE PRISON.

*LATYMER (as if suddenly awaking).*

Let go my arms! Why do ye mock me? Ha!  
 False villain! I can reach thee still. 'T is nought;  
 Thank God, I slept. Boy! that a silly dream  
 Should make me breathless as with desperate strife,  
 And fill my brain with horror!—Strange!—I thought,  
 While sadly musing o'er my numbered hours,  
 A silent angel came and set me free,  
 And pointed to my home. There Edith stood  
 To greet her lord; when one like Lawrency  
 Leaped from the earth beneath my very feet,  
 And bore her shrieking thence. 'T was terrible;  
 Still I behold that look of malice, mixed  
 With fiercer passion—Hark! the bolt revolves.

*Enter MARION, stealthily.*

My mute purveyor, I ne'er hailed thy step  
 As now I do. Speak to me.

*MARION.*

I am changed

Since you beheld me.

*LATYMER.*

So thou art, indeed;  
 Or else this dungeon-light gives ghastlier hue  
 Than captive cheeks are wont to wear.

*MARION.*

I mean

My heart is changed.

*LATYMER.*

Gentler it cannot be;  
 And that thou art not grown less merciful  
 This visit proves.

MARIION.

I bring nor hope, nor aid ;  
 Hope mocks me ever ; pity veils her brow ;  
 The flowers I plant bear thorns. Why should I deal  
 In mercy's sweet and tender offices,  
 Yet ne'er partake of them ?

LATYMER.

Because thou art—  
 Stern as thou seem'st, and wronged as thou may'st be—  
 A woman still.

MARIION (*aside*).

Now, wherefore parley thus ?  
 Sir, do you love your life ? Nay, answer me ;  
 And on the instant.

LATYMER.

I am young to meet  
 The grisly monster, open-armed, and, more,  
 I would not that our trysting-place should be  
 The traitor's scaffold.

MARIION.

Thou would'st then be free ?

LATYMER.

Ev'n so, fair witch.

MARIION.

It is ill jesting now  
 With death and torture round you. Know then, sir,  
 I come to traffic with thee for thy life ;  
 My price—revenge. Look on me. I am wronged—  
 And, being a woman, friendless, weak, and frail,  
 I need the service of a stalwart arm  
 Like thine. Do but my bidding, and thou'rt free ;  
 Refuse, and here I leave thee to thy doom,—  
 Slow, dim despair, and gaoler bribed to slay.  
 Come,—choose. But three days past, I would have spent  
 My heart's blood, drop by drop, to save from harm  
 One hair of that fair brow. I'll not look back :  
 Love lies behind—hate onward . . . Would'st thou live ? . . .  
 But now my thought grows wild, my senses reel,—  
 Blood!—I will have his blood !

LATYMER.

Can passion work  
 A change so fearful ? Thou hast not yet named  
 Him who hath wronged thee ?

MARION.

Lawrence.

LATYMER.

My friend ?

Leave thy revenge to God. I will not stain  
 This hand with kindred blood, on such vague cause  
 As thy wild words have shewn. What hath he done ?

MARION.

No more. Back to thy fetters and thy straw ;  
 Thy fearless look misled me—I mistook  
 Thy nature. I will work mine own revenge.  
 Hear *thou* the sentence which was read to me—  
 “ Starve, if thou wilt, and die !”

(She retires.)

LATYMER.

O Edith ! Edith !

MARION (returns suddenly).

Stay, I have news for thee. Thy Edith lies  
 Within a ruffian’s snare—Ev’n as we speak,  
 ’Tis closing round her !

LATYMER.

Ha ! my dream again !

Yet now I slumber not. Stay—tell me more.  
 Torturer, wilt thou leave me ?

MARION (going).

Think on that.

LATYMER.

Hold—hold—in pity ! Is this dungeon hell,  
 And yon fair thing a demon sent to prove  
 My spirit’s strength ? . . . . I—I will follow thee :  
 Girl, thou hast raised a fiend, with which to dwell  
 Alone exceeds my power ! What of my wife ?  
 My Edith ? has she —— Woman, thou didst speak  
 Of danger—of a snare ! Fool—fool !—’t is plain—  
 It is—it is my dream’s reality !

MARION.

Wilt thou revenge me ? Swear !

LATYMER.

I swear !

MARION (unlocks the chain).

’Tis well ;

(Brings a disguise.)

Throw these rude garments o’er you. Quickly ; now,  
 Follow with boldness ; but, dost hear ? no word.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V.—A STREET NEAR THE CASTLE.

*Enter LATYMER and MARION.*

MARION.

Now thou art free ; away, and quickly make  
Thy ransom good.

*(Stops as she retires.)*

Hist you!—Avoid the Tower,  
For man to-day makes holiday to see  
His fellow butchered. Fare you well ! [Exit MARION.

LATYMER.

The Tower ?  
What secret impulse bids me seek the spot  
From which she warns me ? I will go. Good rags,  
Be my protection.

*(As he is going, enter some Townspeople.)*

LATYMER.

Hold—I pray you, sir,  
What do they at the Tower ?

TOWNSMAN.

What do they at  
The Tower ? Curtail man's fair proportions, sir.  
Would'st see the subjects they do practise on,  
Thither with me. *(Dead march without.)*

ANOTHER.

Back, neighbours,—back, I say !  
Room for this lady. Do you heed me ?

TOWNSMAN.

Aye—

Surely. 'Twere pity but all dames should see  
What frolic's toward here. O woman—woman !  
How doth the prying imp of curious heart  
Make ye but tigers ! Were some luckless rogue  
Impaled, or flayed alive,—yea, simply hanged,  
What is your wont ? To don your ribboned gear,  
Parade the street in gaping clusters, bid  
Your gayest fellows, and, with laugh and jest,  
Shut up the deathful day ! Kind woman !—Pah !  
The devil might take your kindness at a gulp,  
And fear no choking. Come, sirs, let us on.

*[Exeunt, LATYMER follows, and enter at the other side*

HUGH KENSELL and others, armed, with a Townsman.

## TOWNSMAN.

By yonder corner ! Ha ! mine eye just caught  
The flutter of his ragged cloak. He makes  
Straight for the river !

## KENSELL.

Twenty crowns I give  
The man who grasps him first. Jerome, and Cole,  
Round to yon corner, and head back the game.  
We follow on his track. Who's for the crowns ?

## TOWNSMAN.

Start fair, sirs. One must win. The prize is sure.

[*Exeunt, running different ways.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

## ACT IV.

SCENE I.—THE GARDEN AT ELLINGHAM.

EDITH—ETHELIND.

EDITH.

Look at yon dial, Ethelind ; the day  
Is surely waning.

ETHELIND.

'T is just noon.

EDITH.

No more ?

Alas, fair sun, what blessed thing hast found ?  
What charm in this wild labyrinth of woe,—  
That thou dost linger thus to gaze on it,  
And art repaid ?

ETHELIND.

Dear madam, gaze not thus  
Into the bosom of these sultry heavens  
With an unsheltered brow. Let me but throw  
This veil around you.

EDITH.

Wrap me in my shroud—

Grief's veil : is that not best, my Ethelind ?  
A mantle welcome to the day-tired eye,  
Drooping and fainting for its rest ; a robe  
Fairer of fashion, yea, more coveted  
Than princely vestments : for it wraps a slave  
From bondage freed, no more the sport of sin,  
Ambition's thirst—nor passion's haunted dream—  
Nor grief—nor dread. Come here and sit by me.  
Did I not talk of dreams ? I'll tell thee what  
Befell last night.

ETHELIND.

What was 't, dear lady ?

EDITH.

Hark !

Put close thine ear ; are we secure ? Methinks

The air is listening, it has grown so still—  
 The flowers seem glancing hitherward. Come on,  
 Into this nook; their bright eyes pain me. Hist!  
 'T was thus:—There sat a weight upon my bosom,  
 A crouching phantom, whose white ghastly hand  
 Beckoned my sleep away. There was a sound  
 Of fluttering wings, as if a prisoned bird  
 Had seen her love-mate in the skies at play,  
 And would be with him. Then—

(*They walk aside conversing.*)

*Enter VIVIAN, muttering angrily.*

VIVIAN.

'T is ever thus,—

I see—with pride. While plotting, it doth sit  
 With drooping brow, and lips demurely pursed,  
 A humble suitor—till its end be won,  
 And then it doth begin to flout and scold  
 And shew its blacker nature. I know not  
 When I have been so stirred!

(*Exit.*)

(*EDITH and ETHELIND return.*)

ETHELIND.

You wakened then?

The blessed Virgin shield us from all ill:  
 Would we might never dream!

EDITH.

So thou wouldest cast  
 A world away! Sweet soother! gentle sleep!—  
 Who paints forgotten pictures on our hearts,  
 So that we deem them real; gives despair  
 Hope's healthful whisper; brings the beggar wealth;  
 Plucks down oppression; bursts the prison door;  
 And justice gives, unbribed. Nay, let us dream;  
 For only then, if we perforce must err,  
 'T is done in innocence. Whose form is that  
 Amid the trees? Methought that here mine eyes  
 Might shun the presence of false-scheming men;  
 But there's no peace—no peace!

ETHELIND.

I know his gait;

'T is Walter Vivian. Look, he turns away;  
 Now stops—now turns again. How chafed he seems!  
 Thou wouldest avoid him, lady?

EDITH.

Prithee, come

This way.

## ETHELIND.

In yonder bower we shall be safe  
 From his rude scrutiny. Retire, sweet madam ;  
 I have a charm to lure this dragon hence.  
 Trust him to me. (As they go out, re-enter VIVIAN.)

VIVIAN.

He grows in malice, too,  
 E'en as in villany . . . . . Blind and sottish fool !  
 To yoke my fortune to so wild a car,  
 Which bears me breathless over rugged ways,  
 And depths scarce fathomed, from whose fearful leap  
 My cooler thought recoils. And for what end  
 Have I done this ? For none. Offence nor feud  
 Had I with Latymer ; no revenge to wreak  
 In blood or ruin . . . . I was poor before,  
 So am I still. By Heav'n, I'll move no more  
 In aid of Lawrency ! As yet —

Enter ETHELIND.

ETHELIND.

How now ?  
 What sturdy vagrant's this that dare approach  
 So near my mistress' person ? Out ! — Alack !  
 'Tis Master Vivian ! Pardon, gentle sir,  
 I took you for a rogue — some petty thief —  
 Some gaol-bird newly freed ; but now I see  
 How much I did mistake. (Curtsying ironically.)

VIVIAN.

Well said, my lass.

No music soothes me like a woman's tongue  
 Tuned for a scold. I am in a bitter mood,  
 And would be cheered ; so here I'll rest me ; now  
 Go on : thou hast a spirit, — in good faith,  
 Thou hast a spirit.

ETHELIND.

Would that men might say  
 The like of thee ! Thou wear'st a sword, indeed, —  
 (Is 't of true metal, or a peacock's plume ?)  
 And hast a manly swagger — airs would fright  
 My very grandame ; still, I dare be sworn,  
 The worth o' the picture's chiefly in the frame.

VIVIAN.

Again well spoken. Rosier lips than thine, —  
 And, now I mark thee close, a slenderer form,  
 Yea, smaller feet, mine eyesight hath not scanned

This many a day. I'd almost kiss thee, girl,  
But for a vow I made, when sorely hurt  
In a vain quarrel—

ETHELIND.

To which sapient pledge  
My lips, and thine own ears, are much beholden.  
May a poor damsel know what mighty cause  
Hath moved this generous ire? At shovel-board  
Did Master Holdfast beat thee? or, perchance,  
Was the last flask of Malvoisie too sour  
To please thy cunning palate?

VIVIAN.

Worse than that.

What think you? The new lord took strange offence  
At some misdoing; struck the steward twice,  
A grey old man that might have been his sire,  
And hath discharged the cellarer, a man  
I held in high esteem.

ETHELIND.

I know thou didst.

A most discreet old man—

VIVIAN.

True, child—'tis base!

And, but my pouch is empty as a drum,  
I'd serve his beck no longer.

ETHELIND.

Art thou mad,  
To tell me so? What, if yon busy bird,  
Affecting but to plume her painted wings  
Close at thine ear, were gathering up a tale  
T' amuse thy master? Thou 'dst be packing soon;  
Ay, sir, right quickly thou 'dst be fain to take  
Thine honoured spyship hence.

VIVIAN.

My master, truly!  
Since when I wore his livery? Hark you, girl!  
His neck's no safer than another man's;  
Were it my will to—Humph—I'll talk no more.

ETHELIND.

'T is best. Thou 'dst else betray some confidence  
That none but knaves should hear; some thievish craft;  
Some scheme that, like a slimy reptile, crawls  
To sting in darkness; some most valorous plot  
Against a woman, when no manly foot

Is near to crush ye. By these heavens that shine,  
 One stained with deeds like this had better dwell  
 On savage shores, with things untaught and wild,  
 Than strut the world, clad in such garb as thine,  
 And call himself a man !

VIVIAN.

It was not I—

No deed of mine—I thought— *(Aside; turns away.)*  
 Am I a fool,

To blush and stammer like a chidden child  
 Before this wench's eye? 'T is bitter truth  
 Gives her words venom; she but drives more deep  
 A thorn was fixed before. I am not yet  
 So much at odds with virtue, as to make  
 All reconcilement vain. I'll speak to her—  
 Tell her the tidings; ask her— Ethelind!  
 Hem! Ethelind!

ETHELIND.

Go; I am sad. I'd weep,  
 But for an heartless ruffler standing by  
 To laugh and mock at me.

VIVIAN.

I'd mock thee not.

Nay, Ethelind—dear girl—believe me, now;  
 Less hardened than I seem, I here reject  
 An office fits me not. I honour thee,  
 And pity thy poor mistress.

ETHELIND.

'T is too late.

Alas—alas! too late!

VIVIAN.

For once thou'rt wrong.

Canst keep a secret safely? Spare thy fib,—  
 For I will trust thee, woman as thou art,  
 Having some slight discretion. I have heard—  
 (No matter how, but I believe the tale)—  
 That, by a hand unknown, some instruments,  
 Useful for man's enlargement, were conveyed  
 To an imprisoned knight, one Latymer;  
 Who thereupon escaped, and left behind  
 Some fragments of black bread, an empty chain,  
 And a kind caution to his careful wards  
 To make their captives surer.

ETHELIND.

Is this true?

VIVIAN.

'T was thought he sailed for Flanders; but of this I have no certain knowledge. To thy mistress, And, with these news possessed, sing in her ear A song of comfort. Say, withal, that I—I, Walter Vivian, kiss her hands, in shame That I have stained my erewhile manhood, thus Joining her crafty foe;—but from henceforth Am vowed her champion.

ETHELIND.

Never would I seek  
A blither errand.

VIVIAN.

To thy charge, my maid.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—A PART OF THE GROUNDS AS IN ACT II.

*Enter MARION as a page.*

MARION.

Well, I have traced this dark, corroding ill  
Through nerve and vein, and, as I deemed, the core  
Is—Edith! Mocking villain, thou shalt make  
A dear account!—'T was well I waited not  
The cold and sluggish aid of Latymer.  
My ready path lies open. I will seem,  
False wretch, thy faithful and most loving slave—  
The tool and pandar of thy hate and crimes—  
Until the ripe hour comes: and then I'll doff  
This servile badge, and shew thee Marion!

(Horns without.)

What—from the chase? Hunter, thyself art snared.

[*Exit.*]*Enter LAWRENCY, with huntsmen, &c.*

LAWRENCY.

Hang me yon spotted brach without delay.  
Beauty, ye call her!—Hang her. 'Tis the wont

Of beauties to mislead. Dost hear me, sir ?  
Now what dost gape at ?

HUNTSMAN.

Did your honour say  
The spotted brach ? The best —

LAWRENCY (*impatiently*).

She shall be hanged.

Away, and do it.

HUNTSMAN.

Sir, the hound is staunch !

LAWRENCY.

Dost parley with me, fellow ? Here, give up  
Thy belt and horn. Seek out another lord.  
Take thyself hence.

(*The huntsman throws down his belt, &c. and exit.*)  
Where's Julian ? Where's the page ?  
Perchance his service, being so young, hath not  
Yet lost its duty. Now where stays he ? Ha !

[Enter MARION.

Come hither. Look, boy, yonder lies a belt ;  
'Tis George the huntsman's. Take it to him. Hold —  
Put this into the pouch (*gives money*), and tell him that  
I would not ask a better-blooded hound  
Than Beauty : yet she's wild. Say I shall hunt  
To-morrow, and that, by the covert side,  
I must not miss his honest face. Away !

He's gone else. [Exit MARION, enter VIVIAN.  
Thou here ! lazy fellow — hence !

Did I not give thee hasty missives ? Now  
Beshrew thee ! What dost here ?

VIVIAN.

A quiet stroll  
Did better suit my fancy. I'll not ride  
To-night ; no, nor to-morrow, nor next day,  
Unless the humour serve.

LAWRENCY.

Why, what means this ?

Away, sirs. [Attendants go out.  
Now, thou most untoward knave,  
Where are the papers my rash confidence  
Gave to thy charge ?

VIVIAN.

Safe, sir. The scrolls are safe ;  
Heed not for that. But I'll no longer be

An unrewarded drudge, to bear the scorn  
 Which shames thy former smooth-lipped courtesy.  
 'T was then "Good Walter," and "My trusty friend,  
 Lend me thine aid."—The game is played, and I,  
 The while thou 'rt fattening on the treasure won,  
 In purse and prospect am as lean as ever.  
 Give me a thousand crowns!

LAWRENCY.

Get thee to bed  
 And sleep thy senses sober.

VIVIAN.

If I drink,  
 'T is but to drown the devil. He is here—  
 Here at my elbow, at my cup, my bed,  
 With his cold hissing whisper, calling me  
 A pandar to the base and cruel ends  
 Of a yet greater villain than myself;—  
 Yet that, methinks, is much.

LAWRENCY (*turning away*).

There, get thee gone.  
 I 'll talk with thee to-morrow.

VIVIAN (*following*).

No, to-day.

LAWRENCY.

Tempt not my patience further. Look you, Vivian.  
 Let us not quarrel. I am hot as thou,  
 And, being provoked, more dangerous. I say,  
 Beware!

VIVIAN.

Beware thyself. Why, who art thou?  
 My father was an honest gentleman :  
 Canst say as much for thine?

LAWRENCY (*grasps his sword, but looses it again*).

Go—go—thou 'rt drunk.

This time I pardon thee.

VIVIAN.

He mouths it well ;  
 This manly weaver of destructive wiles,  
 'Gainst boys and women !—Yon poor helpless girl  
 Is not thy victim. I protect her, I.  
 Storm as thou wilt, and vapour with thy sword,  
 That bird hath 'scaped the snare.

LAWRENCY (*draws, and advances on him*).

Stand from thy path,  
Fool! wilt thou tempt thy fate?

VIVIAN.

I fear thee not,—

Come on.

(*They fight, and VIVIAN falls.*)

The curse of English hearts upon  
Thy French-taught tricks of fence,—thou hadst me there;  
Thy bodkin's point has prick'd me from the world  
Ere I could make my peace with honesty.  
This is Heaven's justice. On this very spot  
I sold myself to thee. As thou 'rt a man,  
Retrace with speed thy steps of damning guilt;  
For there's a bloodhound baying on thy track,  
Will quit thee not until his tooth be fleshed  
Upon thine heart! O me! I faint . . . . this blood—  
Ah! lady—lady—ill for thee, I fear. (He dies.)

LAWRENCY.

Besrew thee for a quarrel-seeking knave;  
Thou forcedst this on me. When the whelp we rear  
Grows to a lion with his teeth undrawn,  
No marvel if those dangerous fangs be turned  
Upon their feeder. Vivian, this was ill—  
The morning of our friendship promised not  
To couch in bloody clouds. Ah—destiny! [Exit.

*Enter EDITH in humble garments.*

EDITH.

Alas! my shadow warns me that the day  
Is older than I thought. My champion, ho!—  
Soft—here he lies! Great Heaven—to slumber thus  
At such a moment. Hist! Good friend, awake!  
'T was not my will to keep thee. Sentinel,  
Is this thy watchful faith? Up—up, for pity!  
Alas! what stain is on my robe? 'T is red—  
'T is blood—the sleeper's blood—and he will wake  
No more, till angels summon. Now, indeed,  
Am I deserted. Ah!

*Re-enter LAWRENCY, attended by GROSSVELT and WILHELM.*

LAWRENCY (*approaching her*).

My truant bird!

Would'st slip thy jesses? Grows thy perch so dull,  
That thou would'st fain be soaring?

EDITH.

Hast thou torn  
Life's temple down, and now return'st to mock  
Its senseless ruins?

LAWRENCY.

Nay, I'd spare thee, love,  
This most unsightly scene; but—Knaves, there needs  
No leechcraft. Bear him in—thence, speedily,  
With rites befitting, to his kindred clay.  
For this mischance I will account to all  
Who have the right to question.

(GROS. and WILH. remove the body.)  
Thou art pale,

Yet thou look'st gladly.

EDITH.

Aye, my lord is safe.  
Safe, and at liberty. These cheering news  
Thy murdered comrade brought me.

LAWRENCY.

Then he died  
With falsehood on his lips. Aye, Latymer  
Escaped, but how I know not;—none, be sure,  
Save grim Hugh Kensell, and one else—his child—  
Had access to his cell; and that, I trow,  
Was deep enough. But there were hawks abroad,  
And the freed pigeon circled round so oft,  
Ere darting homeward, that his flight was stayed;—  
He'll scarce try that again. Now, fairest cousin,  
Nay, fear me not—I do not love thee now.

(Leads her to a seat.)

I would but tell thee of a thing I saw  
When absent last. Watson, thou know'st, is dead?

EDITH.

*Dead?*

LAWRENCY.

On the scaffold. So is Clarke—these both  
*Less guilty* than thy lord. I stood by them  
In the last moments of their awful doom;  
They were dragged forth\*—

\* The execution of the two priests, Watson and Clarke, was attended with all the barbarities at that period practised upon traitors.

EDITH.

Spare me the tale.

LAWRENCY.

And hanged;

But not to death. Oh! that were merciful  
 To what succeeded! With clenched hands—with throats  
 Black with the stifling rope, and breath that came  
 In short convulsive throbs—they chained them down—  
 (Already pale?)—'Tis well thou could'st not hear  
 The last loud shriek of mortal anguish, wrung  
 From those whose superhuman fortitude  
 Struck all that gazed with awe—men hear it yet;  
 But, oh! the savage yell that round me rose  
 When the masked torturer, with his bloody hands,  
 Tore from their wretched bosoms life's quick source,  
 The dogs might fight for it! In sooth, I wept,  
 To think that fearful scene was but the first  
 Of a most dismal pageant. *Who comes next?*  
 List to the thrilling whisper of thy heart;— . . . .

(Pause. *He rises.*)

He is condemned.

EDITH (*kneeling at his feet*).

Hear me, thou bloody judge!

If thou canst fear—hast faith in holy prayer—  
 If thou believ'st there is a time when thou,  
 Before a wak'ning universe, shalt stand  
 And answer the demand—“Why didst thou thus?  
 Where is thy brother?”—spare my perilled lord.  
 Or, if thou canst not, take me to him. Let  
 Us meet on this side death. We do not ask  
 To mar thy triumph—to regain the peace  
 Thy hand has wrested from us. We will die—  
 We will both die.

LAWRENCY (*aside, irresolutely*).

Sad music! Cease—oh, cease!

Quick, to my aid, dark fiend, or I am lost  
 To my revenge, and thee! . . . . (*Recovering himself.*)  
 Arise, arise!

I owe ye no such favour. Woman, hark!

(Seizes her arm.)

Heard you that cry? It is the greedy rack  
 Distorting his young limbs! look! his white cheek,  
 Palsied with inner anguish! his pale lips  
 That thou hast kissed—the hand that thou hast strained—

The breast that was thy pillow ! Hark ! he cries  
 Aloud for death, and death is merciful—  
 But *thou*—thou wilt not hear !

EDITH (*starts up with sudden wildness*).

Speak—speak ! canst save him ?

LAWRENCY.

Aye . . . . . So thy part be done.

EDITH (*after a pause of intense agitation*).

"Tis o'er—I yield !

Do what thou wilt. Come, devil as thou art,  
 Struggle no longer for thy hellish hire.

Body and soul, destroy me. Work thy will.

In all the outward fashion of a man

Thou dost confront me, and I hear thy voice

Fearfully tempting. Look ! there is God's throne

Whereto the stain of murder doth attain

Ere earth can green it o'er ; God's blessed air

Surrounds us, and is passing onward now,

Soiled with thy words of sin and treachery,

Yet harmless all to thee ; from this I know

That Heaven forsakes me ! No ; he shall not die !

*I* will not leave that form of honoured life

To the cold gaze of scoffing multitudes !

*I* will not give the generous heart a prey

For human wolves to tear ! What price too dear

That makes him free ? Take life—hope—honour—all ;—

But save him—save him ! —

(*She falls senseless at his feet*.)

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

## ACT V.

## SCENE I.—AN APARTMENT.

*EDITH is seated on a couch, her head bent down on her hands. GIOVANNI kneels at her feet.*

GIOVANNI.

She hears me not; yet for a weary hour  
I kneel, and clasp this dead-cold hand, and pray  
Some word or sign of consciousness. Oh! speak,  
Lady! sweet mistress! poor Giovanni calls. . . .  
These woes have killed her.

EDITH.

Had they but such power!  
Life, that deserts joy's new and glittering fane,  
Clings to its dismal ruins. 'Tis the rich  
In hope who die—the loved—those for whose wealth  
Bow'd hearts, and hands uplift, and sacrifice  
Of tears, are offered—vainly. Hark! a step!  
'Tis not the hour. Who comes?

Enter MARION.

MARION.

My master, lady,  
Craves pardon for his seeming negligence.  
He lingers but to seal a hurried scroll  
Touching the theme on which you spoke this morn,  
And will attend you, madam. [Exit MARION.

EDITH (aside).

Then all's true.

I did not dream. Under the peaceful wing  
Of holy night the dark assassin comes  
To strike at my soul's health. . . . . Giovanni—hark!  
Had guilty snares beset thee—life become  
A thing unprized—which, being spent, would buy  
A dearer life's salvation—what would'st do?  
Speak boldly. Thou would'st—ha!

GIOVANNI.

*Die, madam! Spurn  
The slavish load—and die!*

EDITH.

*Why, that's well said. (Pauses.)  
Giovanni, thou hast loved thy mistress?*

GIOVANNI.

Aye,  
In truth. Oh! let not my wild words offend;  
They will have way. Look; on this earth, which gave  
Its common life to all, I kneel, and say—  
Lady, I love thee! with a love so deep  
It scorns to wear the prostituted name  
That men bestow on it. It was not meet  
That this wild heart should lift its thought to thee  
In maddest dreams. No—to the welcome grave,  
Its fittest home, my secret had gone down,  
But grief, that makes all equal, gave it tongue—  
And therewith hope—that I who still have lived  
Thy humble minister—poor dutious slave—  
Might die with thee, sweet lady.

EDITH.

*Hadst thou, too,  
Thy portion in this grief?*

GIOVANNI (*joyfully*).

*You heard—and I  
May serve you still.*

EDITH.

Aye, with the like true faith.  
Thou wilt; I know thee. Canst thou call to mind  
One summer's eve, Giovanni, when I sat  
In yonder bower, and (quicklier to beguile  
The absence of my lord) taught thee strange names  
Of many curious herbs, whose deep hearts hide  
The healing balm of death? and, idly too,  
As then I thought, shewed thee a cunning mean  
To draw from them their rank and inner juice,  
And make them skilful ministers to hearts,  
Like mine, past other cure?

GIOVANNI.

*I know them, madam.  
I will obey you.*

*(He goes out.)*

EDITH.

*Tyrant! I recall*

The pledge extorted by thy bloody threat,  
 And, in its stead, give life. May that suffice  
 To turn thy vengeance from that richer food  
 For which it hungers ; teach thee penitence,  
 And pity to thy kind.

(She moves towards a portrait and kneels.)

Mother, 'tis thou

Should'st stead me in this misery ; but, oh !  
 It breaks my heart to look on thy sweet face,  
 So proudly innocent. Sweet parent, if,  
 As I did never nestle in thy breast—  
 Nor in thy kind arms ready refuge weep  
 My infant griefs away — so my lost soul  
 May miss the path to that bless'd world where thou  
 Hast rest for aye ; yet pray for me — for one  
 Who, sick with sorrow and beset with snares,  
 Found this world's paths too rugged for her tread,  
 And the grave's peace too tempting. Ha ! what light  
 Steals o'er thy features ? 'Tis Heaven speaks to me  
 In pity of this deed, and —

(Re-enter GIOVANNI with chalice.)

Thanks ; you have found

All my deliverers ; cool, and fresh, and filled  
 With that rich solvent, at whose softest kiss  
 Life's chain drops from us. For this service, boy,  
 I must be still thy debtor.

GIOVANNI.

There is more

To do. Revenge.

EDITH.

I will not have it so.

The ills that I have suffered are too great  
 For man's revenge. I would not he should die.  
 I'll tread that path alone. My last true friend,  
 Farewell.

GIOVANNI.

Farewell, sweet mistress.

[He retires. After a pause a step is heard  
 approaching.

EDITH (starting to her feet).

Ha ! he comes.

Earth chides me hence — Heav'n beckons — and I pause  
 As there were space for question. (Drinks.) Fatal cup !  
 Sweet hath o'ercome thy bitter — life thy death.

Dudley is saved! . . . Now—*now*, thou merciless,  
Approach—come. . . . I am ready for thee. Why  
Dost linger, Lawrence?

*Enter LATYMER, pale, his dress bloody.*

Thy message? Speak!

Then has their hate outstripp'd my slow resolve.  
I am but hastening to thee.

LATYMER.

Edith—wife!

Calm thee—I live.

EDITH (*in a low, troubled tone*).

My brain seems wandering.

The villain mocked me, for he could not save,  
And so my sweet lord died.

LATYMER.

He lives for thee.

Oh! if I dream not still—if thou 'rt, indeed,  
My own bless'd Edith, calm this frenzied mood.  
Oh! lost too long! come to thy home, my heart,  
And be at peace. I have prepared a bower  
Secure and sweet. No envious hand can trace  
The spot where Dudley, with a miser's care,  
Shall hide his treasure. Haste, sweet love; thy hand.  
Nay! Dost not know me?

EDITH.

Aye, methinks I do.

But jest not with me, love, for I have slept  
And had a dream so fearful, that I see  
Its phantoms round me yet! Oh! can it be  
That I do stand beside thy living form,  
Feeling thy touch, and dwelling on thy tone?  
Speak on—speak gently. Say that woes are past,  
That we shall live as in old loving days,  
And all be peace again.

LATYMER.

It shall.

EDITH (*clinging frantically to him*).

O come!

Why linger, then? Why draw one other breath  
In this hot atmosphere of shame and sin?  
O come—come—come!

LATYMER (*eagerly*).

It is my prayer.

EDITH (*sinking back*).

Ah, me!

This is lost labour, Dudley. I would fly—  
Indeed, I would : but ever when I move  
Some unseen monster seems to coil around  
And force me from your arms.

LATYMER (*drawing her towards a casement*).

Look forth, my love.

There lies our path, across the wooded glen,  
Whose mazes we have trod so oft together.  
Shall we essay it now ? For, lo ! the night  
From her fringed mantle flings a silvery star,  
To be our guide and welcome.

EDITH.

Blessed star !

Stand in the gate of heaven, and guide me hence.  
My strength begins to fail. O Lawrency !  
Thy bitter vengeance !

LATYMER.

Ha ! my dungeon-dream !

Thou dost not mean that —— Mercy, God !

EDITH.

'Tis true.

I see you murmur to yourself. 'Twas guilt ;  
Yet do not cast me from you.

LATYMER.

Edith, Edith ?

Life's earliest blessing — my sweet playfellow —  
Beloved companion — and, of later days,  
True friend and counsellor — it was thine hand —  
The fond assurance of thy love and faith —  
Bore up my fetters that I felt them not,  
Nor knew they bound me. My lone draught grew sweet,  
As with thy kiss ; my dungeon seemed not drear, —  
From every barred pane thy bright face shone  
Radiant with hopeful love. The accuser spoke  
His words of blood — the judge — I heard them not ;  
There was no voice but thine. And thou — that thou  
Should'st falsely —

EDITH.

Help, Heaven.

[GIOVANNI *enters and springs to her assistance*.

LATYMER.

Edith — Edith, love,

Spoke I too harshly? Look, I kneel, and with  
A suitor's humblest accents—aye, with tears,  
Adjure thee, from this rack of fiery pain,  
Absolve me quickly.

GIOVANNI.

Hadst thou come this morn,  
All had been well; now, *death*.

EDITH (*reviving*).

Thy hand—thy hand;  
Arm thee, dear husband; he has spoken sooth;  
Our life of love is over.

LATYMER.

I have heard  
Of strange delusions that do mock men's souls . . . .  
How changed thou art! Thy voice is deep and stern,  
That made such music as a sleepless bird  
Might scatter through night's waste. That drooping form,  
Where is its matchless majesty? Why grows  
Thy brow so dark and wrinkled that, but now,  
Fair as an angel's seemed?

EDITH.

Dudley, I die.

Start not, grieve not, but hear. When thou was gone,  
Came there that foul betrayer—that false friend—  
And hourly hissed into my helpless ear  
Dark tales of blood and torture; spoke of wolves,  
That, shaped like men, had bloodier hearts, and yelled  
And thirsted for thy life—my husband's life—  
Which he could save, he only; and myself  
Alone could find the ransom . . . . I grow faint.  
Nay, spur thy fancy; bid it leap the gulf  
And roam the hell beyond. Canst guess the price  
Of thy redemption? Do not speak. 'Tis true;  
In your white cheek I read it.

LATYMER.

Villain--villain!

EDITH.

He talked of what was done; the fate our friends  
Had borne, their shrieks, their terrible death. In brief,  
I did consent—

LATYMER.

Ha!

EDITH (*faintly*).

Let me say all;

Though in mine agony I did consent  
 To be thy saviour—think not, dearest lord,  
 I would have lived to be thy scorn and shame !  
 No, no ; I better knew myself and thee.  
 Listen. The hour was near—the torturer sent  
 To claim his devilish pact. Then, desperately,  
 I looked within, and found I had o'erlooked  
 A way to freedom—I resolved to die.  
 For Lawrencey, wretch though he was, I knew  
 He would not urge his hate beyond the grave,  
 And still might save thee. If he should not, we  
 At least should meet in heaven, and feel no shame.  
 Well, for the means—this faithful boy—See, love,  
 For *my* sake favour him ; he aided me.  
 There's more to tell ; but you—you guess it—yes.  
 I have drunk it—and I die . . . . Dudley, forgive—  
 Sweet husband, pardon me.      (*Sinks at his feet.*)

LATYMER.

I stand, and gaze,  
 As if some magic touch had made me stone,  
 Leaving no sense but vision, and that spared  
 For torture—not in mercy! Art thou Edith,  
 My love and life? . . . My flesh begins to creep—  
 How came I hither? . . . . Would this dream were o'er!

EDITH.

Dudley . . . Come nearer . . . . All is darkness now—  
 But I can hear thy voice—my faint heart thrills  
 To its accustomed echo . . . . Griev'st thou, Dudley?

LATYMER.

My tears speak for me! . . . Edith—I . . . . O God!  
 I am a wretched and heart-stricken man—  
 A guilty man . . . . Spare me this child—this lamb  
 From out the world's great flock! Thou wilt not—no—  
 She dies—and, ah! for whom? . . . . O gentle one—  
 O noblest heart that e'er this world did bear!  
 I have done this—I loved thee more than heaven—  
 And jealous heaven recalls thee to itself,  
 And will not heed my prayers . . . Thus hand in hand,  
 Cold lip to lip, and bleeding heart to heart,  
 We will obey the summons.

[Places her on a seat and kneels supporting her.

EDITH.

Welcome rest!  
 The day has been too long—Nay, do you weep?

No tears . . . . I am your wife—your honoured wife—  
 Your—happy—wife . . . . Dear Dudley, will you give me  
 The good night kiss?—That's well—and now, my head  
 Feels weary—on thy bosom—thus—to sleep . . . .

LATYMER.

To sleep! . . . . saidst thou—to . . . . Edith—Edith—I—  
 'Tis o'er.

[*He lies down at her feet. After a moment GIOVANNI approaches and whispers him.*]

What art thou, bloody counsellor?—

I know thy favour—and I heed thy words—  
 Devil, or man—they are alike—I thank thee.

(*Rushes out.*)

(*Scene closes.*)

SCENE II.—A DARK GALLERY.

*Armed attendants waiting.*

FIRST MAN.

Finish thy tale. We burst the outer gate,  
 And entered by the oriel. Whither then?

SECOND MAN.

Straight to the lady's chamber. I, meanwhile,  
 Sought thee, and our bold comrades here, with whom  
 He bade me wait his summons, to bear forth  
 His noble lady. That once done—we seize  
 The base informer.

FIRST MAN.

What's the signal?

(*A blow is struck on the panel.*)

SECOND MAN.

*That!*

(*They rush out.*)

## SCENE III.—A SALOON.—NIGHT.

LAWRENCY, *at a table covered with books, papers, plans, &c.*

LAWRENCY.

Thrice have I moved those hangings; yet could swear  
 That their dark folds concealed some form instinct  
 With moving life. How yon grim portrait stares!  
 His eyes outgleam my cresset—S'death, he smiles!  
 Truce with thy ghastly merriment; I'll spoil  
 Thy grinning, friend, to-morrow! The night's revel  
 Hath something wearied me, and sense o'ertaxed  
 Plays us, in spite, strange tricks. (A pause—he writes.)

'T is very still,

And yet it is not. I have seen it writ  
 That on the brooding earth *no silence* dwells,  
 But ever there are deep mysterious sounds,  
 Whose source we know not, flitting to and fro,  
 Like shades condemned, that wander earth and heaven,  
 Yet nowhere find a home. Well, to these lists:—

“*Hangings for chamber in the eastern wing,*  
*Six nobles and a mark.*” “*For closing in*  
*The right of pasturage, ten marks.*” “*The sale*  
*Of old Dame Gillian's tapestry brought no more*  
*Than fourteen crowns.*” Fourteen! Now, by my faith,  
 Why here is roguery! What's this? “*The plan*  
*For building of the church you promised, when*  
*The steeple of the old one —*” kindly fell,  
 And oped my landward view. “*They cannot pray —*  
*No roof above.*” No roof! the less remains  
 Betwixt their prayers and heaven. Away with that!  
 I will not give a mark. .... Hark! some one stirs.  
 'T is nought. Lo! how the tongueless night doth give  
 Significance to every wonted sound!

'T is time. Who waits there? Julian, boy!

[Enter MARION.  
 The hour?

MARION.

Deep midnight, sir.

LAWRENCY.

'T is fitting. Place a lamp  
 Without.

MARION (*aside*).

He hath not changed his purpose. Heart,  
Hold *thine*.

LAWRENCY.

Away, sir! Go!

MARION (*approaching*).

My gentle lord  
Is weary with much study. I have here  
A draught so soothing —

LAWRENCY.

Give it me! I drink  
To —— Dost thou see the devil, boy, that thus  
You tremble and grow pale? . . . I drink to *Hate*!  
And *Vengeance*, crowned and full! (*Drinks*).

MARION.

The cup is drained.

There's no drop left — not one — a worthy pledge —  
Revenge — revenge — O God! (*Rushes out*).

LAWRENCY.

The boy hath had  
His revel with the pages. His young brain —  
Why wait I here? My soul hath spurned aside  
Its sick oppression, and triumphant sits  
Upon the chariot of my hopes, which stand,  
Full-winged, to bear me home! Thus, Edith, *thus*  
I sweep to my revenge!

(*As he is rushing out, the door is thrown open.*  
*He stands petrified.*)

Pale dream, that hast  
No bond, nor fellowship with breathing men,  
Remain, or vanish, know thy mission vain: —  
Thou canst not teach me fear! Back to thy grave,  
Thou gaunt and bloody thing!

[*While he speaks, LATYMER has appeared at the door.*

LATYMER.

To summon thee  
I come!

LAWRENCY (*aside, recovering*).

'Tis he himself — his voice — his eye! —  
Whence, and how cam'st thou hither?

LATYMER.

I was bidden  
Unto a bloodier banquet, but escaped,  
And I am here. I knew not, gentle cousin,

My seat so fairly filled. When these old halls  
Shone bright with midnight lamps and wassailry,  
Was't meet *I* should be hence?

LAWRENCY.

Dudley, be calm,  
You need repose. Ho, Julian!

LATYMER (*placing himself before him*).

Nay, would'st quit  
Thy guest thus rudely, I perforce must seem  
Discourteous too. Look on this sword, and mark,  
If thou dar'st seek, by voice or sign, to raise  
Thy slumbering vassals to oppose me here,  
I'll set it in thy bosom!

LAWRENCY (*aside*).

Curses light

Upon those drunken villains! . . . . He is armed —  
I helpless . . . . In his wild and glaring eye  
Despair and madness sit. . . . . I am a child  
Beneath his arm! (*Looks eagerly round.*) The flask! —  
O whispering fiend,  
That still hath lured me onward — must I make  
*Another step with thee?* (*Drops a ring into the chalice.*)  
I'll walk aside;  
If he should stumble on the smiling death,  
Why, 't is no deed of mine. (*Rises, and walks forward.*)  
Drink, cousin, drink!  
We'll talk anon. You're travel-worn, and tired —  
Drink! All shall be made clear. You will confess  
I have done cleverly and wisely. Come,  
This is a merry meeting!

LATYMER.

And shall be

Yet merrier, ere it end. Aye, give me wine;  
For, sooth to say, cold cells and prison fare  
Do suck the marrow from quick-blooded youth,  
And make a ghost of him. (*Drinks.*)

There's life in that!

Aha! how glibly through the warming veins  
The red magician speeds! Now tell me, cousin,  
Hast thou done well by me? Hast safely kept  
My precious gem? Holds honour in thy breast  
Her wonted throne?

LAWRENCY.

What's this? Some meddling foe

(For such I have) hath soiled my fair report  
 In my good kinsman's mind. Did he but know  
 With what a dangerous, self-denying zeal,  
 I laboured for his life — and Edith, too,  
 His gentle bride — with what a brother's love,  
 Respectful tenderness, and —

LATYMER.

So I thought!

Why, how the slaves belied thee who presumed  
 To call thee — false! Cousin, this curious ball —  
 This world — hath known strange habitants, — the bold,  
 The stealthy sinners, — murderers, courtiers, rogues,  
 Flatterers, and thieves, — but never one so base,  
 But, in some secret chamber of his heart,  
 There lurked a chord of mercy. It might be  
 A child, a dog, a bird, that kept the tone  
 Awake — but still 't was something. Could I think  
*Thou* would'st not listen to that syren voice  
 That older villains hear?

LAWRENCY (*aside*).

Thou'rt slow of work,

My potent minister, when most I need  
 Despatch! His cheek grows white — he gnaws his lip!  
 Good, good! (*A loud.*) What say'st thou, Dudley? What  
 dost mean?  
 Mercy! To whom?

LATYMER (*starting up*).

To that poor lamb which I,

Deluded fool! hid in the he-wolf's den  
 For safety! Hark! dost hear her bleating cry?  
 Thou didst not think the shepherd's ear was yet  
 Awake to such a sound!

[LAWRENCY, *alarmed at his increasing violence, starts up.* LATYMER *seizes him.*

LAWRENCY.

Take off thy hand!

She shall come hither.

LATYMER.

She shall come, indeed!

And in such guise that what our weak regards  
 Dwelt on, for beauty, shall wax pale before  
 Its bright succeeding. True, her cheek hath lost  
 Its honest red, her eye its fire, her look  
 Its scorn, that should have struck ~~temptation~~ dumb;

But, in their stead, there glitters on her brow  
 The star of everlasting peace, beyond  
 Thy power to cloud.

LAWRENCY.

Ha!

LATYMER.

Why hast thou ordained  
 This royal feast?—set forth thy plate, thy gold,  
 Rich fruits, and luscious wines? Surely to keep  
 A day of victory—a birth-night eve—  
 A bridal morn! But where is she should fill  
 That stately seat?—Where? Hark! the cymbals! breathe  
 The low recorders! raise the song! strew flowers!  
 A bright procession comes! Place for the queen  
 Of the fair revel!

(*Dashes open the door in centre, displaying the corpse of EDITH on a couch. The armed servants bear it forward, GIOVANNI and MARION follow.*)

LAWRENCY.

This is some wild jest,  
 Some Christmas mummary!.... You cannot play  
 Upon men's fears and fancies thus.... Come, speak!  
 What have ye there,  
 So dim and corpse-like in its shape and hue?  
 This is past fooling. Answer me!

(*LATYMER lifts the covering.*)

*Is death*

The revel's queen? Ho! stand aside.... What, sirs?  
 Think ye I dare not meet her eye to eye?

\* (*They stand back.*)

How this hath chanced, I know not. Since thou hast  
 Paid Nature's debt, I can forgive thee mine.  
 Thou who didst mar by fresh and budding hopes—  
 Seal up the fount of mercy in my soul,  
 Repel my gentler purposes—and pay  
 Mine eager love with scorn. Firm in my wrongs,  
 I'll look on thee again, thou proud —

(*He lifts the veil, then, dropping it, falls beside the couch.*)

Oh, God!

Look not upon me thus!—not *thus*! Oh, Edith!  
 Thou know'st I am not used to meet thy smile!  
 Open those white lips, taunt me with my guilt,  
 Point thy pale fingers to the abyss whose fires  
 Are kindling to avenge thee! Did I say

I loved thee *not*?....It was the fiend within  
 That vomited the lie! Hate and revenge  
 Snatch from this mangled heart their mask and scale,  
 And leave it naked to remorse. Ah! why —  
 Why didst thou crush the angel mercy down,  
 And raise instead this demon? Wherefore deal  
 So hardly with my blind and baffled love,  
 That, mad for vengeance, saw not where it struck?  
 Oh! art thou gone, sweet Edith? Must the world  
 Awake to glory and to life, and thou  
 Keep thy cold pillow,—the red, writhing worm,  
 At banquet on thy beauty? Edith — cousin —  
 My love — my hope — my promise — art thou gone  
 For ever and for ever?

LATYMER.

Grovel there,

Type of thy brother serpent! Groan, howl, mourn!  
 Why dost not weep too! (*Advancing.*) Loose that lifeless  
 hand!

Pitiless ruffian! Hast thou so much grace,  
 Commend thy soul to God.

LAWRENCY (*raising his head*).

Peace, wretched boy.

Trouble me not. I have no thought to spend  
 On thee. Why stand'st thou, like a hooded priest,  
 Mumbling of shrift and prayer? What mean'st thou?

LATYMER.

Man —

Thine hour is come! Each living breath of thine  
 Offers foul insult to that thing of clay.

Thou hard of heart—I'll talk no more with thee;  
 Aye, gloat upon thy master-work of guilt.

(*Signs to attendants to advance.*)

Then take thy meed.

LAWRENCY (*starting to his feet*).

Is't so? Then list to me.

With all the serpent passion of man's soul,  
 I hate thee, Latymer! From infancy —  
 From merry childhood — hate thee. Thou hast been  
 The shadow on my path — cloud of my air,  
 That shut out heaven — the reptile on whose scales  
 I trod, and slipped. Ev'n from that earliest time  
 When, sporting in the woods, I plucked a rose,  
 The queen-flower of the fields, for Edith's hair,  
 And you — the stronger — tore the coveted prize

Away, and bade me seek if all the woods  
 Held such another :—from that hour thou hast  
 Forestalled me ever. Who was't taught me sin ?  
 Who, hate ?—Who, jealousy ? Whose influence drove  
 My tortured heart to wild and reckless ways,  
 That rooted me from out thy father's love,  
 And set my bark afloat in life's wide sea  
 With scarce a sail ? Who took my promised bride—  
 My beautiful —whose fair possessions might  
 Have given the outcast beggar wealth and home ?  
 Why thou—and thou—and thou ! And didst thou dream,  
 Poor fool ! that I should crouch beneath thy glare,  
 Though stealing through the dark, defenceless night,  
 With murder-scowling bravoes at thy back,  
 To slay me on the hearth ?—Hast yet to learn . . . . ?  
 You called me—serpent . . . Dost thou feel my fangs  
 At work within thee ?—Ha ! thou dost ! Down—down !  
 Boy, wilt thou die unshaven ? To thy knees,  
 And pray !

LATYMER (*dropping his sword, faintly*).

I feel it. For this half-hour gone,  
 My soul hath wrestled with the coiling death ;  
 Now nature yields into its cold embrace,  
 Shuddering and stiffening. Give me light and air—  
 I thirst. (*Attendant offers wine.*)

You proffer death. That cup —'twas drugged,—  
 Where lies my Edith ?—my —my martyred love,—  
 For my sake murdered . . . Lead me to her side—  
 This anguish, love, is sweet ; each fiery throb  
 Doth pluck our souls together . . . I shall soon  
 Be with thee now . . . My sight fails (*feeling*), but I know  
 This face — how cold ! My Edith, it is I !

(*Falls on the couch.*)

GIOVANNI (*to attendants*).

What ! are ye men, yet stand and gaze as if  
 On deeds of daily import ?

(*They advance on LAWRENCY.*)

LAWRENCY (*snatching up LATYMER's sword*).

I will take

But one life more, that's *his* who first shall raise  
 His steel against me. Not to *you* I owe  
 Or pay this being. From some mortal cup  
 Proceed, I know, these scorching pangs that drink  
 Its fainting sources up. Who gave't I know not . . .  
 Stand ye aside in peace, and let me die.

FIRST MAN (*to the rest*).

Draw back awhile. 'Tis true. His livid cheek  
Confirms his words. Repent, unhappy man.  
Think on thy crimes—thy plots—thy treachery  
Against the king.

GIOVANNI.

The woman that you loved,  
In furtherance of a wild and fiendish hate,  
You practised with base menace, and lewd arts,  
Against her spirit's health, and, failing, slew  
Her life, through wild despair.

FIRST MAN.

You did espouse  
The royal lady's cause, then trafficked with  
Your brother-traitors' blood.

GIOVANNI.

Your earliest friend—  
The son of him who gave your infant years  
A blest and kindly shelter—you have slain  
By poison at the board.

LAWRENCY.

Speak to the dust  
Wherewith this seared, uprooted stalk of life  
Shall quickly be confounded. It will heed  
As much as I. Ye babbling fools, that still  
Condemn the weeds of guilt, but never heed  
What hand hath sown and fostered them, get hence  
And leave me to my fate. No word from lips  
Of earth can move me more.

MARION (*coming forward*).

Art sure of that?

The draught whose hideous, fatal functions call  
Blood from thy cheek, light from thine eye, and from  
Thy scarcely ripened manhood power and life,  
Was given—*by me*.

LAWRENCY.

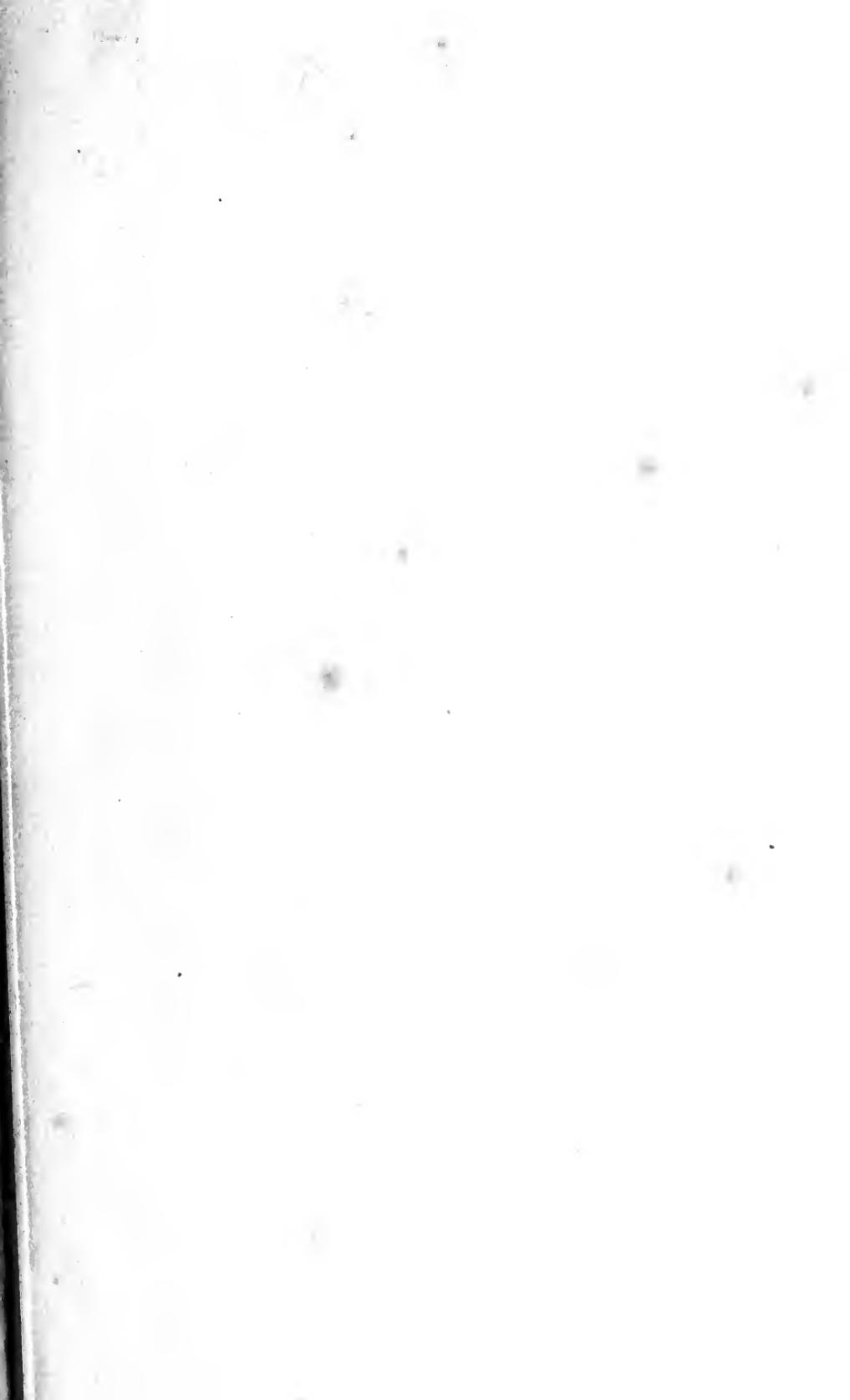
Ah!—wherefore?

(*She discovers herself—LAWRENCY starts, and staggers towards her.*)

Marion!—Thou!

[*Falls dead.*

THE END.





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